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"How I Keep Fit At Fifty-eight"

By Bernarr Macfadden

"HOW I Keep Fit At Fifty-eight" is a series of articles by Bernarr Macfadden to appear in the *Physical Culture Magazine* beginning with the September issue, setting forth the fundamental principles of developing and maintaining super-health.

Mr. Macfadden has maintained all along that health is the first and greatest capital. He has proved it in his own experience in a most astonishing manner. When he came to New York City in 1893, he had fifty dollars in his pocket.

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Mr. Macfadden believes in getting all there is out of life. He maintains that while you are alive you might just as well live to the fullest extent. Many people are walking around, cheating the cemetery. They are half or three-quarters dead. Life means nothing to them. They are just hibernating. But if you want to make something of your life that is really worth while, if you want to live buoyantly with a throbbing force of life stimulating your activities every day, you should learn the fundamental principles of health as presented in this series of articles by Bernarr Macfadden.

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As he is today, age fifty-eight. This photograph was taken a short time before the appearance of this advertisement

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GHOST STORIES

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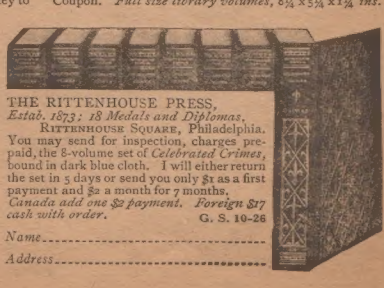

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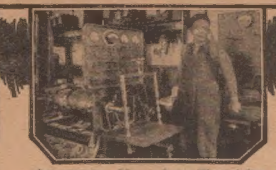

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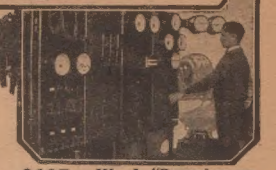

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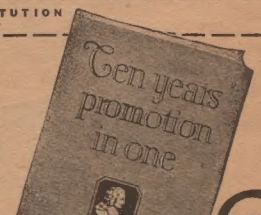

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GHOST STORIES
October 1926

Have You Psychic Insight?

By

GEORGE WILLIAM WILDER

IN the life of every thinking human being there come experiences that make him sympathetic, if not actually an adherent, to the belief that a spirit world exists. Lacking definite proof, we hesitate to admit our secret belief. Lacking definite proof, we say nothing, fearing ridicule.

Many a man, many a woman, some more markedly than others, can sense coming events. Sometimes this amazing insight amounts to nothing more than a "feeling." Sometimes this psychic insight is accompanied by picture flashes, pictures of people or events flashed to the mind's eye.

A woman, the wife of a well-to-do manufacturer—a woman who prefers to remain unknown in public print—has this psychic insight to an unusual degree. One night, while preparing to retire, she saw for the briefest fraction of a second the face of a little child, her five-year-old niece. This face was outlined to her on the wall above her dressing-table. The face of the child showed terror, and a pair of tiny hands were reaching out as if in supplication. Immediately the woman turned to her husband and said: "Little Mary, our niece, has been killed—and I know she was killed by drowning."

The niece lived in Oklahoma, the woman in New York. But in spite of the distance, within three hours there came over the telegraph wires the message that the child had been drowned, and had met her death a good half hour before the time of the picture flash.

So much for one woman's experience. Here is the experience of Mr. John Caldwell—an experience of an entirely different sort:

Mr. Caldwell is a traveling salesman. His employers manufacture linen goods. His territory covers the New England States, and a trip to take in his entire territory requires at least six weeks. His employers were going through a slack season. Mr. Caldwell had to meet a large hotel buyer at New Bedford by Friday afternoon, or lose a most important sale, possibly pitch his firm into a condition close to bankruptcy. Mr. Caldwell had only twenty miles to go to reach New Bedford. He was going by hired automobile. He set out. Within eight miles or so of New Bedford he came to a wooden bridge, and with the forewheels of the car already upon the bridge he shouted to the driver to stop. He had had a *feeling* of impending disaster. The driver drew up short and backed off the bridge. And while the men watched, the rushing torrent of water beneath the bridge swept aside the wooden structure. The men, in dumb awe, sat and gave thanks for the death they had escaped.

Only Mr. Caldwell's psychic sense—plus an unknown message from some unknown world—saved them.

Have you this psychic sense? Encourage it. Foster it as you would your most cherished possession. You never know but that this sense might some day save your life, the lives of your loved ones, your possessions.

And you foster this sense by keeping your physical body in condition as nearly perfect as you humanly can.

PAWN of the

The deaf are made to hear—the dead play intricate
shatters the stillness of midnight, though she claims to
sudden death of

By Lyon Mearson

IN the distant corners of that large living room the shadows stirred furtively, uneasily. Momentarily the fire's dying embers made them larger, more grotesque.

There was a tenebrous thickness in the corners that would have seemed almost unaccounted for, to one unfamiliar with the tricks of a flickering firelight.

It was after two in the morning, and Terry Lenihan, in his overstuffed chair under the bridge lamp, debated with himself the advisability of turning in for the night. Before him stood a low Oriental table, inlaid with ivory and varicolored woods, forming a chessboard, and on the table in four neat and well-ordered rows stood a set of ivory chessmen, white and blood-red.

Suddenly the eyes of Terry widened, a flash of surprised interest gleaming in their blue depths. He leaned forward, his strong white hands gripping the arms of the chair until the nails dug into the upholstery and the white of the knuckles showed.

Had he imagined it?

Or had the king's pawn actually moved forward two spaces?

No. It was so. In front of him was the chessboard, with the blood-red men before him. On the other side of the table was an empty chair, facing the white chessmen.

"The chair is empty," said Terry to himself.

This was indisputable. Yet how could it be? The white king's pawn had moved forward two spaces! This he could see. There it was, gleaming alone in the center of the board.

What hand had moved it, in this room that contained only Terry Lenihan and the shifting, dying shadows?

"Getting sleepy," said Terry. "Must have moved the darned thing myself without thinking."

HIS hand went forward and, in the almost reflex action that is familiar to every chess player, he moved his own red pawn forward to meet the white in the usual chess opening. He had no purpose in this. Almost any chess player, seeing a board with the men standing in this position, would have done the same, idly, just as a ball player with a ball in his hand would absent-mindedly toss it up and catch it.

The effect, however, was electrical.

His opponent's white knight jumped the row of pawns and moved forward crookedly!

Rigid, transfixed, Terry Lenihan stared at the chessboard. He had seen no human hand; no living fingers had moved the white knight. Yet it had moved, and now it stood solidly and squarely in its new space. What strange power was this that confronted him?

There were few things of flesh and blood that could strike fear into the heart of Terry Lenihan, as the front line trenches and the Argonne forest knew. But this was nothing human, nothing that one could lay his hand upon. A strange haze seemed to fall upon the room, dispelled but feebly in the one place where the amber light of the bridge lamp beat down upon Terry, the Oriental chessboard, and the empty chair that seemed no longer empty, though no earthly eyes could discern any form sitting there.

Terry leaned forward in his chair. A strange, sinister will entered into him, chilling his blood and clutching with icy talons at his heart. Impelled by something stronger than himself, urged and pushed on by he knew not what, a force felt by each nerve in his body and each hair upon his head, his right hand went forward and he moved his own knight.

Immediately, silently, the opposing bishop's pawn went forward two spaces.

"The Dead Man's gambit!" came in a hushed whisper through Terry's dry lips.

IT was an opening he had invented with Martin Grimm, the strange, silent, old recluse who lived in the adjoining house, an opening he had once christened with such a grim whimsicality. A gambit is an opening in which a pawn is sacrificed in order to gain position.

"The Dead Man's gambit!" whispered Terry again, as his hand went forward and he completed the answering move, only to have it instantly responded to in the correct style.

"I thought only old Grimm and I knew that!"

Silently the strange game went on, as the fire ebbed lower and ever lower, and the dark shadows piled up on the walls and in the corners. Above the chessmen the bridge lamp burned in a single spot of futile light, and, pale and rigid, Terry sat, leaning forward slightly and making the required moves. From the Presence came no sound, no indication; inexorably, inevitably, the game went on.

At last, with the game drawing to a close, the young man maneuvered the Thing that was his opponent into an almost impossible position. Tensely he inclined over the board, his eyes piercing into the curious game.

There was no answering move for a space . . . only black, mysterious silence and the mounting shadows. Finally Terry found speech.

"Well, get out of that one," he said grimly, wetting his lips for the words, which came a trifle triumphantly. His voice sounded oddly flat and depthless in the silent place, and the accustomed room seemed almost unfamiliar to his staring eyes.

THERE was an answering crash that came like a stroke of lightning. The chessmen were swept from the board and sent flying to all parts of the room, as though an angry man had done it in a fit of blind rage.

Silence again. An opaque silence, as if the room were alone with its dead. The bridge light cut through the dark-

UNSEEN

games of chess—the voice of the beautiful Lenore be miles away——What strange influences surround the old Martin Grimm?

ness steadily, and the fire at last went out. The game was done.

. . . . . .

TERRY sat and stared, his every sense on the alert, awakened to its fullest perception by the crashing of the chessmen. He gazed fixedly at the empty chair opposite him, as though he had been through a nightmare and had just awakened.

"I must have been awake," he told himself, noting that the chessmen were scattered all over the floor, and bending forward to rescue one of them from the fireplace.

"And yet," said he, "it hardly seems possible." He held in his hand the rook he had salvaged from the flames, and examined the ivory piece as though he had never seen it before.

This was futile, of course, and he rose and walked around the room, trying to get the "feel" of the place, the familiar room where he had lived for years. He might have been a stranger in an utterly strange room. There was an atmosphere he had never noted before; an atmosphere that had never been there before.

Terry's friends had more than once expressed the belief that he was psychic. He was a peculiarly sensitive sort, responsive to unseen influence in his every fibre. If there were such a thing as a good "medium," Terry would have been one.

It is said, considered Terry, that certain animals, dogs for example, can see colors and objects not visible to the human eye; colors and things of such a low rate of vibration —or is it a high rate, questioned Terry—that the human eye is incapable of grasping them. Was this what had happened to him? Had he, for a short time, been given a keener

"There was Martin Grimm, already getting cold in death, sitting at the telephone"

perceptivity, a keener sensitivity than is accorded to the ordinary human being?

He laughed this off, yet the feeling persisted.

Certainly no human had ever before gone through a chess game with an opponent who did not exist.

"To say nothing of beating him," remarked Terry with a short laugh.

There obtruded itself upon his consciousness, at this time, the purring hum of an automobile motor running—the steady, insistent drone of a car that is standing still with the motor going, ready for a quick start.

Subconsciously, Terry noticed from the sound that the car was standing at the house next to his—the house of Martin Grimm, his opponent in many chess games. He noted the matter with no particular emphasis, yet there occurred to him the thought that it was strange that the peculiar old recluse should have a visitor at that time of night, and that the car should be standing, vibrant and alive, ready for a quick departure.

He was recalled from his thoughts and brought back to a quiet contemplation of the matter, however, by the sharp closing of the door of the Grimm home, and the tap, tap, tap of hurried footsteps across the sidewalk to the car.

A feminine voice came to his ears through the open window:

"759 West Forty-first Street—and for God's sake, hurry!

Strange! Terry's mind jumped at conclusions. He leaned to his window in time to catch the tail end of the taxicab moving out of sight just as a slim, white young arm, beautiful in the light of the street lamp, was reaching out to close the taxi door with a bang.

Pondering these things, Terry looked at his watch. It was two-thirty.

An odd lassitude overtook him, strange because, though the hour was late, the events of this night had made him thoroughly awake. It was not long before he was in bed, sleeping soundly.

HE was still sleeping soundly at nine o'clock the next morning when Marius, his man, knocked on his door and awakened him. He opened his eyes to the sober mien of the young divinity student, who was working his way toward ordination by "doing for" Terry.

"Wattell's—oh, excuse me, Marius, musn't mention—what's the idea of waking me up in the middle of the night?" and his master yawned.

"I'm sorry, sir, but there's a man downstairs who says he must see you."

"Must?" Terry's eyebrows went up.

"Yes, sir. He says he's from Headquarters."

Terry was instantly awake. From Headquarters!

"Is my bath ready?" he inquired, and at Marius' assurance that it was, he was out of bed and on his way. "Tell him I'll be down in ten minutes."

IN less than ten minutes, clad in bathrobe and slippers, he was facing his visitor, the typical Headquarter's detective, large, clumsy, a derby hat somewhat too small for him perched perilously on top of his big head, and the conventional stump of a cigar between his ill formed and yellowed teeth.

"Just what can I do for you?" queried Terry. "My man says you're from——"

"I am," remarked his visitor from that corner of his mouth not occupied in holding the unlit stump of what must once have been an extremely bad cigar, judging from the dead odor. Terry looked at him inquiringly.

"Name's Carton," said the visitor laconically. "Do you know Mr. Grimm?"

"You mean Martin Grimm, whose house is next to this one?" Terry asked.

"The same. D'you know him?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Tell ya soon enough. When'd ya see him last?"

"Late last night," replied Terry. "I played chess with him."

"How late?"

"It was after one when I left."

"Did anyone see you go?" asked the man from Headquarters.

"Why, what difference can that ——" began Terry, a trifle out of patience at the meaningless, to him, catechism, and a bit on his dignity.

"Well, I'll tell ya." Carton interrupted Terry, still speaking from the corner of his capacious mouth. "It makes a lot of difference, see."

Terry looked his unspoken inquiry, and the detective went on.

"The poor old bird was found dead this morning," said the detective.

"Dead!" exclaimed Terry. "Why I just left him——"

"Yeh, I know. That's why I'm asking you questions. What'd you think this was, a guessing contest?"

"Dead?" said Terry again. "What from?"

The detective looked at him significantly, and shifted the cigar stump from one side of his mouth to the other without touching it with his fingers . . . a facial feat of interest.

"He was murdered," he said, "between one and two o'clock this morning. Murdered—that's what from."

Terry's mind instantly reviewed the events of last night, which had for the moment been driven from his consciousness by the questioning of his unexpected visitor. Between one and two this morning! He had a vision of a waiting taxicab with the motor running, and

"Who's that? What can it be?"

a white arm, beautiful in the moonlight, slamming the door.

Lenore! She had been there! He had heard her voice, and had seen her taxicab, with her inside, no doubt, roar its way around the corner of the quiet street on two wheels. Then she——

"DID any one else call on Martin Grimm last night after you left?" broke in his interlocutor, regarding him intently.

"Eh? No, not that I know of," he answered at once. He felt that he must learn a little more of just what had happened, before he gave this man any more information. And if Lenore were really mixed up in this—his heart went cold at the thought. He himself had not quite realized what the mere mention of her name meant to him.

"What were you doing there until one o'clock?" went on the man from Headquarters.

"Playing chess," said Terry, shortly.

"Dumb game," was the detective's comment. "With old Grimm?"

Terry nodded.

"How did he seem when you left?"

"In what way do you mean that?" inquired Terry.

"I mean, was he sad, or apprehensive, or lively, or what?"

"Why, he was about as usual, I think," replied Terry slowly. "I noticed no difference. Except that I beat him—and he got angry."

"Ah, so you quarrelled!" a gleam of real interest appeared in the detective's eyes as he leaped at this little bit of information.

Terry laughed. "No, it's not a clue, I'm afraid, officer. I beat him very often, and he was always angry. That was part of the game to him."

"What did you do after that?" went on his inquisitor.

"I said good night—this was a few minutes after one—and went home," said Terry. "Now really, Carton——"

"Never mind that, if you please. What did you do after you went home—go to bed?"

"Why, not at once. I sat here in the living room. . . ."

"Was anyone else here?"

"No, I was alone. My man had gone to bed."

"What did you do here?" went on Carton.

"I played chess," said Terry, before thinking. He had not intended to say this, because he knew it would be difficult to explain—impossible, probably . . . since he himself had his own doubts of the matter.

The detective leaped at this. "You just said you were alone!"

Terry laughed. "I meant, I worked out some chess problems . . . you can do that alone, you know. Don't you play chess?"

"WHO, me?" The detective looked his disgust. "Think I got nothing better to do? What time did you quit playing with yourself, and go to bed?"

"About two-thirty," was Terry's answer.

"Did you hear anything at all. Didn't you hear some people come or go next door . . . or an automobile . . . Didn't an automobile stop in front of the house . . . or something?"

It seemed that a pair of phantom shoes was mounting the stairway

Terry shook his head promptly. "No," he said. "I heard nothing."

"Do you know any of the other people who live there?" asked the man from Headquarters.

"No one else lives there except Martin Grimm and his butler. . . I know the butler, of course," answered Terry.

"Wasn't there a girl who used to live there?" The detective inspected him narrowly as he asked this.

"Yes . . . that was Lenore . . . his niece. But she hasn't

lived there for some time. I—I haven't seen her lately."

"How long ago did she leave?"

"Oh, two or three months," replied Terry, who could have told the exact minute she moved out.

"Why did she quit living there?" His questioner went on implacably.

"WHY, I don't know exactly. . . . I think they just couldn't get along together. You know how old men are . . . and Martin Grimm's niece is a young girl with a mind of her own, and I suppose she wouldn't stand having her life ordered by him. Really, though, I never discussed the matter with her or with him. But I think that's about it. You know how it is," he looked at the detective ingenuously. "If you were a beautiful young girl——"

"Sure, I know," Carton said hastily. "Us young girls must stick together. Never mind about that. Now we're getting somewhere."

"Where?" asked Terry, amused, knowing that the detective had made absolutely no headway.

"Never mind where," said the detective. "So you think this here Lenore Whatsername had a grudge against the old feller?"

"I don't think anything of the sort," said Terry. "She is very fond of him, and visited him quite frequently, I know. Why do you ask me all these questions—why don't you ask the butler?"

"That's just the reason. According to the butler, you were the last person there before old Grimm got bumped off. That's why I'm here. There's something funny about this case."

"I see." So the butler had said nothing about the late visit of Lenore. Perhaps he hadn't known—he might have been asleep when it occurred. Or perhaps Lenore hadn't actually been there—suppose he had just thought so, just as he had thought he played chess with a——

But no, the thing was unthinkable. Terry was too level-headed to dismiss the events of last night as a dream. They had really happened, but he knew he must be careful. Lenore seemed to be mixed up in the case in a way he did not quite understand, and he must know more about the matter before divulging anything . . . even information relating to the most innocent actions. That flying visit of Lenore's last night, with the taxicab ready for a quick getaway—that looked very far from innocent; or, at least, Terry told himself, it would look far from innocent to the detective in front of him.

"Well, why do you suspect me?" he asked the detective.

"We suspect everyone connected with a case, until finally we narrow it——"

"UNTIL you get to the right one, eh? Well, you might just as well leave me out of your reckoning. In the first place, the old man was alive when I left him last night—and the butler, who saw me to the door, saw him alive at that time. Didn't he tell you that?"

The detective nodded. "Sure, he did—but that ain't saying that I'm taking no butler's word for it, is it? Now, what kind of a detective would you think I was if I did that, hah?" He looked to Terry for confirmation, meanwhile making futile efforts to light his cigar stump, which was so dead and useless as to be beyond all redemption.

Terry said nothing, but the detective leaned forward in a sudden burst of confidence. "We really don't suspect you, Mr. Lenihan—we know all about you. But there's some funny things about this here case that I thought you might have some kind of an angle on."

"Well, why don't you tell me all about it," answered Terry. "I was very fond of old Martin Grimm—but your suspicion of me rather drove the shock of the affair right out of my mind. How can I help you in any way unless you tell me all the circumstances? All I know is that he was alive and healthy when I left him last night."

"The circumstances is peculiar," replied the sleuth. "I'll tell you what we know."

"Good. Have a cigar?" Terry started toward his humidor.

The body was already cold—yet the eyes suddenly had opened wide

"Thanks, yes." The man from Headquarters accepted the gift, taking it from Terry's hand and putting it into his vest pocket. "I'll save it for after lunch—this here one'll do now." Terry nodded—he thought he never had seen a more durable cigar.

"Well, anyway, central answers the call, see—but there is no response. See?"

Terry nodded. "You mean, she answered the signal, but heard no voice."

"That's right. Well, the receiver (*Continued on page 59*)

Out of the *Storm-Swept* NIGHT

When a man comes home unexpectedly—a man known to be hundreds of miles away—there can be only a ghostly explanation for his presence

By Rosa Zagnoni

"Dear, you are pale . . . you are so very pale. Are you ill?"

THE wind howled and slashed at the gables of the bungalow. The rain beat a deafening tattoo against the windows, and trickled down their surfaces. The tall pines bent and swayed and the branches smacked against the east wall, their needles rasping like nails against the stucco. Rivulets of rain gushed over the overflowing eaves. Flashes of lightning rent the sky in the direction of the valley. The thunder rumbled and groaned, and the hills echoed the boom from east to west.

In the library Mrs. Bradford was lowering the shades, going on tiptoes from one window to another. She smiled to herself, and kept going . . . on tiptoes, so that the children would not wake . . . as if they could hear anything with that infernal noise outside.

It was a habit with Mrs. Bradford to tip-toe about the house when the children were asleep. It was also a part of that atmosphere of mute protection that she created about them, especially when their father was away. She was becoming accustomed to passing nights and days alone, since her husband had been promoted to the position of traveling accountant with the firm with which he had been connected for the past fifteen years.

Still, she always felt safer when he was at home. Things did not seem quite normal unless he was there. The storm made her nervous, and after drawing the shades she sat near the open fire, reluctant to go to bed.

Splashing, splashing of the rain! Howling, howling of the wind! Beating, beating of the pine branches against the stucco! What a night! She sat there by the fire, her shoulders jerking nervously, biting her lips at each toll of thunder, trying not to feel the tremor that crept subtly over her even to her finger tips, and that strange impression of impending disaster that a storm invariably created in her mind. The clock on the mantel struck eleven. The front door blew open; the east wind scattered papers and magazines to the floor; the lights flickered; the fire sent up a shimmering of sparks. She arose to close the door and the wind whizzed through the room, blowing apart the portieres. As she stepped into the hall, she (*Continued on page 93*)

The FLAMING Curse

If Parke Belden could have believed in the ... would have been branded with the ...

NO man ever came into our office who arrested my attention so compellingly as Parke Belden. He was the oddest looking creature imaginable, with turquoise blue eyes which held a furtive look of fear as though terror itself had frozen in them long years ago. But the most astonishing thing about him was the fact that his right hand always fluttered over his right cheek as though concealing something thereupon.

One of my fellow architects whispered to me that we were in great luck. A house that he desired would undoubtedly be as fine as any in the land, for millions of dollars were at his disposal. His name meant nothing to us younger fellows; but we were told that it represented one of the greatest families of the long ago, and that the fortune with it, coming to Parke as the last of the clan, had been greatly augmented because of the penurious life the eccentric had always lead in Europe.

"He has never been in America since he was a lad," I was told, "and he has been seen but few times by any of his compatriots. It is said that the nervous affliction that makes him keep his right hand upon his right cheek made him a super-sensitive recluse."

I was somewhat surprised to be summoned to his presence. This meant assuredly that he was not to build a new house but to remodel an old one, for remodeling is my specialty. I have taken a jig-sawed, be-towered monstrosity of the mid-Victorian era and from it produced the Spanish villa; once an old barn has bloomed again as a Southern Colonial mansion. So I surmised that back of old Parke Belden was an even older house, and in this supposition I was correct. It was to be my mission to renovate it.

"You are to study this ancient dwelling, which has been uninhabited since I was a boy, that we may achieve the greatest results with it," he said, his voice quavering. "There is a plan of the original building, I remember, in a secretary in the great south bed-chamber. Study it with care but do not take it from that room. To accomplish this adequately you must live in that room day and night, for the restoration there must be particularly satisfactory to me. Understand, young man?"

Was there a sinister gleam in those inscrutible old eyes as he consigned me to that room? I was not so certain of it at the time. Afterwards—well that's the story.

"I have lived in many old houses during the process of their reconstruction," I replied. "They hold no surprises for me."

"Hey?" he queried, coming closer. "Surprises? You're not superstitious, young man?"

"Absolutely not!" and I laughed.

"That's right," he agreed. "But you may be chilly down there with autumn days coming on. Have Mark Bell, the caretaker, lay a fire on your hearth. I mind

But what was that that crouched before the flames? In Heaven's name what?

# of Belden Hall

By Paul Jacobs

menace of the vengeful dead, he never dread mark of a hangman's noose

there's a fireplace in the room. Mark must do everything for your comfort or he'll hear from me. Insist upon the fire."

As he was emphasizing the point of a fire on my hearth, I saw him suddenly sway and totter. He could have saved himself with his right hand but it never for a moment left his cheek. When I got to him he was prostrate. I called the office boy.

"Look!" the lad exclaimed, "he has scratched his cheek."

"It is not a scratch——" I answered, gasping.

But the boy had already lifted old Parke who was rapidly coming out of his sinking spell. As he regained consciousness his claw-like hand sought frantically to cover his queerly marked cheek but not before I had noticed that the mark was a singe or brand, and shaped like a noose!

"Just a scratch—nothing at all!" Belden insisted. "Don't bother! I often have these spells and bruise myself. I'm quite well again!" And he strode totteringly up and down, but never once did his hand uncover that devil's sign.

I MOTORED out to Belden Hall which was located some fifty miles from the city on the North Shore. My only companion was a tiny monkey, Tango, a gift to me from a man who had lived long in Brazil. He was my mascot, and I thought I would surely need him this time. The restoration of a house which has stood uninhabited for a lifetime (and such an exceedingly long lifetime as Parke Belden's) is no easy matter.

As I had expected, the place had grown up into a veritable jungle. A dense woods of small trees now separated the house from the highway which was reached by a drive almost a mile in length. What a setting for dark deeds! Though it was near noonday, I drove under the twilight of the trees. I might be murdered here, and never a cry for help be heard, nor a clew found. What had once been streams and ponds had become but a tangled morass.

A blue heron flew up as I crossed a rickety bridge. More than once I had to stop and cut the vines that

"I've strained my back. The wood is heavy...."

grew across the drive-way. Evidently the care-taker approached by another direction. The house itself, a great dark pile, was a mass of vines from which the big windows, with every glass broken, peered like sightless eyes. Stout iron bars secured the windows from the ingress of marauders, however. Up to the very walls of the old house the trees had marched, a conquering army through the years.

THE wide terrace in front had been invaded by shrubbery which had forced up the big tiles at all sorts of odd angles. I got out and peeped through the bars of a window. Upon a billiard table, as though left by a ghostly hand, lay cue and balls, thick with the dusty incrustation of the years.

I heard a step and, turning, saw the care-taker approaching. He was an old fellow in a dark cape such as the aged sometimes wear. I knew that he expected me and understood my mission. "I doubt if the sun ever fully penetrates here even at noon-day," I said to him.

"And why should the sun penetrate to Belden Hall?" he queried enigmatically.

"It must now if I am to see to work on plans," I replied. "Come around to the south side. I must see how much light can get to the south bed-chamber."

"In my mad struggle with the Thing, I felt both the hellish heat of that blazing poker with which the curse had been marked on my face, and the indescribable cold of my contestant. I was wrestling with a skeleton—and there was a murderous strength in those hideous hands! In just a moment——"

I thought I saw a look of astonishment, and even apprehension, pass over his inscrutable old face.

I lead the way around to the south wing through an almost impassable tangle. I wanted to see what my quarters looked like from the outside. The walls were covered by an intricate mass of ivy so that their general outlines and the texture of the brick-work were obliterated. Grasping the main stem of a large vine I pulled it down with its branches so that it lay prone upon the shrubbery below, thus revealing a patch of the original brickwork. This also served to render more distinct the windows of what was undoubtedly the great bed-chamber above.

Passing completely around the house and through some of the lower rooms, I finished my first sketchy investigation. The whole structure had much better be razed to the ground, I concluded, but I knew that that would never be Parke Belden's wish. With infinitely greater difficulty than building a new house, the old one must be restored. So the sooner I got at those plans and began an exhaustive study of them the better.

Just as I was about to insist upon seeing the south-bedroom next, the care-taker's wife appeared with the announcement that supper was ready in their cottage. When we had finished the meal, there was just enough daylight left for me to insist that I must examine again the brick-work which I had uncovered on the south wall. The care-taker came along rather hesitatingly I thought. "I don't hanker to go round that-a-way towards dark," he hazarded.

I WAS rather disdainful. "I suppose next you will be telling me there's a ghost in that old pile!" I exclaimed.

"Don't you know——?" he asked, astonished.

"No!" I answered abruptly. 'And I don't want to! I've lived in too many haunted houses to be disturbed by this one."

Tango, the monk, sat on my shoulder, and we were already approaching the south wall when I noticed that the little beast began to tremble violently.

"Tango is cold," I said. "We must have a nice warm fire tonight in Belden Hall."

Mark Bell shook his head. "You think the little beast is cold?" he said. "I know better. It's terror. Critters sense such things afore humans."

"What are you talking about!" I exclaimed, thinking him an old fool. "Look! Here's the place where I tore down the vine. Why—where is it? I left it prone on the shrubbery here and someone has taken it away! But the roots are not cut! And the brick-work that I exposed is all covered again with ivy!"

A blank look came to my face, I know, but an expression of triumphant satisfaction marked the care-taker's features. Tango at the same moment cuddled into the circle of my folded arms and crept close, trembling, as though for sanctuary.

"Now do you believe me?" Bell whispered eagerly. "There's Something up there that's more than human." He checked himself as though afraid that he would say too much. "If you won't take my word for it look at Tango. Dumb critters sense ——"

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed. But in truth Tango was acting peculiarly. I had never seen him show such apparent fright before, and where had I heard that reversals in the accustomed course of nature presaged the presence of the supernatural! Certainly I had torn a great vine from that very wall but a few hours ago and there was absolutely no mark of disturbance there now.

"WE will both feel more natural when we are established by the fireside, Tango and I," I added. "Please lay a fire at once in the bed-chamber up there—and touch it off."

"Not if I was to have all the money Parke Belden has!" the care-taker replied vehemently. "I might lay the fire—but light it? Never!"

"Why?"

"Don't you know the words of the——"

"I don't want to know the words of any foolish old gibberish!" I exclaimed abruptly. "Parke Belden expressly stated that I might have a fire in that room."

"He did, did he?" Bell queried craftly. "He ought to know if any one does."

"Know what?" I asked. "Don't talk in riddles!"

"But you said you didn't want to know the words I was a-goin' to tell you. Now you tell me something, young feller. Does old Parke still keep his hand over that right cheek?"

"Yes," I replied. "And what is more I know what's under it."

"You do?" he asked eagerly. "Tell me."

"I don't feel at liberty just now," I answered. "But how could there be any connection between—that—and the room up yonder?"

"There's plenty of connection, young feller—plenty. Lots more than you or I or anybody else senses. You'll find out if you're fool enough to sleep in a cursed room. There, I've said it!"

I laughed. "Do you know what a person is apt to think now-a-days if people are too insistent in warning him away from some particular place (*Continued on page 64*)

Guided by a PHANTOM HOUND

In life—or after death—what influence is more powerful than motherhood?

By Bob Swift

AS I look back on the outstanding events of my unique experience, I am compelled to give tribute where tribute is due. Had I been forced to struggle against those dark powers which tormented me, without the muscular equipment of a man, God knows what would have happened to me. I built my own frail body up with physical culture; it made me fit and strong. I shall not attempt to account for the strange circumstances in my life; to analyze them, or say who or what brought them about. Suffice it to say, my once black hair is snow-white now, so awful, so terrifying, so beyond all human explanation were those same events.

I was the only child of Horace Swift, and for years my dad was the district attorney of Fremont, the city we lived in. Father was a "clean-up" prosecutor. He believed in the literal interpretation of the saying, "I am my brother's keeper." To him the letter of the law was sufficient; he never thought of questioning the righteousness or reasonableness of an enactment.

My stepmother was a regally beautiful woman and the first lady of Fremont. She was devoted to my father, and one would have thought that, having no children of her own, she would at least have liked a motherless little boy given into her charge. But she didn't. She endured me with a cold hate I felt but couldn't understand. Now that I'm older, I know that she was unwilling to share my father's affection with anyone.

Had she allowed him to, my father might have loved me dearly, I think. No one looking at us would have taken us for father and son. He was as blond as a Viking; I had ruddy skin, dark hair and green eyes. It pleased my stepmother to twit me with the fact that I did not resemble dad's people. The other side of the house had given me my looks.

My father's wife told me once that my mother had been too pretty to be good, and had died in her sins. At that time I was too young to understand what she meant. I recall how mystified I was at the age of five when Mrs. Swift, number two, warned me never to mention my mother in the presence of father. Obedient to her, I never did.

SHE was very strict, and I was deprived of many things that make life a joy to other children.

Like every other boy, I wanted a dog. My stepmother said, "No! Father detests dogs." He did, too. But I found out why later. I remember I grieved more over my longing for a puppy than over any other restriction of my boyhood. I loved animals, as all young ones do.

As I grew older, I became aware of a strange fact. Out of the twenty rooms in the house, one was locked and never opened under any circumstances.

The servants would not tell me why, so one day I screwed up my courage (I was about ten then) and asked my stepmother. In her usual cold manner, she informed me that it had been my mother's room, and my father had given orders that it should not be opened upon any pretext whatever.

There began to grow in my being a fixed desire to discover for myself what was in that room. I felt that I never could be contented until I found out its secret.

Most of the time I was left to my own devices—and a foolish, dreamy, imaginative lad I was, to be sure. During one of my solitary walks, I made up my mind I had the right to see or hear everything that concerned my mother.

Having decided that I would enter the mystery room, I bided my time and watched.

I tried all our keys, but none of them stirred the bolt in the lock I wished to open.

All right then! I'd try another way.

One evening, when my father and my stepmother were out, I climbed out of the window of my father's bed-room, which was next to the mystery room. I crept along the ledge to a window closed by green blinds.

It was difficult to get my hand between the narrow shutters, but I did it, unhooked the blinds, and swung them back.

The window was locked, but I had known it would be. A heavy chisel inserted between the window case and sill, a sharp application of strength upon it, and snap went the catch at the top! Then with my hot heart pounding like a triphammer, I crawled into the mystery room.

FOR a moment I was in darkness. Then, with shaking fingers, I drew out my flashlight. I touched the button. The room was much like the other chambers in my home, large and square. Save for the layers of dust on the furniture, someone might just have walked out of it.

But my mother had slept in that bed! In the small chair before the dresser she had sat to arrange her lovely hair—— It was a luxurious room, a room fit for a radiant, beautiful woman. How I longed in my loneliness for the fair woman who had lived in this place! The tears streamed down my face.

Here and there around the room I darted my spear of light. I wanted to see it all. Perhaps I never would look upon the dear things she had used again.

Suddenly my flash of light settled upon an enormous, oblong sheet of black, suspended across one end of the room. It was crepe, crinkled, dusty, and sagging from the ceiling to the floor. Crepe signified death! What was behind that strip of funeral covering?

I ventured toward it, awed and reverent. In some obscure and uncertain way I had the impression I was approaching

a shrine. A shower of old dust sifted downward into my face when I touched that edge of black. I choked and coughed, and then—a blow struck my flashlight from my hand and it clattered to the floor and went out.

I felt that blow distinctly, yet I did not hear any sound that might be attributed to a human being.

DEEP-SEATED horror took firm hold on me. I couldn't move; my brain refused to function. Who—or what—was in that hidden room with me?

And then something touched me, a definite though fluttering touch, just across my cheek, as if ice-cold fingers had trailed over it. And the touch left my flesh frozen as it traveled.

Crying out in mortal terror, I turned and stumbled toward the window. As in a nightmare, I was pursued. At the window I came to a quick stop. There in the corner was a figure—a slim white figure, erect, silent and to me, most awful. I jumped from the window and fell.

The next thing I knew, I was in bed, and my father was speaking my name. A search had been made for me and I had been picked up, unconscious, from the ground.

For weeks I lay between life and death. And when I finally did get up, I was a gaunt, thin boy, a weakling compared to the strong lad I had been.

One day my father called me into his study, a small room back of the library. That study was a nightmare to me—it always meant trouble when I was sent there.

"Let me see Dorothy once, before I die?"

Father eyed me over his glasses, and started a tirade against my snooping propensities. I was well enough now to hear what a bad boy I had been. I wouldn't be in my present weak state of health if I'd minded my own business.

"I wanted to find out something about my mother," I answered unwillingly.

"And succeeded in discovering something, I suppose?" my father asked harshly.

"I wasn't there long enough," I said.

"Well, you can see for yourself, Bob, what comes of giving way to temptation," he rejoined in a reasoning tone. "The doctors say you'll never be strong again. You've ruined your health and gained nothing. It's as my wife says, you're a true son of your mother. She was always meddling with forbidden things. All I will tell you of her is this: If she had been obedient to me, to her God, she would now be with her husband and son. She insisted on delving into the life after death. I would not tolerate anyone in my house interfering with the forbidden secrets of the next world. She died at her brother's in Boston—not here. No one can disobey me, and stay under this roof!"

I was near enough a man to be fury-ridden by his words. I hated him for his austerity and his condemnation of my mother. As I stood there, the germ of an idea was born in my mind. My mother had tried to communicate with the dead. Why couldn't I try to communicate with her?

As the days went by, however, I remained weak and ill. I was haunted by that pale figure I'd seen in the corner of the mystery room. I longed and feared to see it again.

I refused to sleep in a dark room, and I was so miserable all the time, I couldn't get well. The doctor forbade me to go to school, so father employed a tutor, and I studied when I felt like it.

My father owned many acres surrounding our home. The land was partly cleared into rolling lawns but there were many stretches of woodland left. At a distance from the house among the trees, father erected a cottage for me, and there my tutor and I lived and worked, because my stepmother disliked my running in and out of the house.

Mr. Wheeler, my teacher, soon discovered I had a flair for drawing, and I made up my mind to be an artist—a portrait painter, Mr. Wheeler urged. He also loaned me a *Physical Culture* magazine, and from it I learned that I could be well again. I subscribed for the magazine and for many months I followed its rules; and how my body changed and grew!

When father discovered my art tendencies, he immediately put a ban upon them. No son of his should join that gang of long-haired men and bobbed-haired women who made up the modern world of artists—not as long as he was above ground.

"You're growing stronger every day, Bob," he told me. "Think about manly things and become a good lawyer. I'll ask for nothing better."

I avoided mentioning my life-saving physical work—I didn't want to give him a chance to forbid it.

I rather think my father's wife didn't want me to get well at all, for it was she who discovered me one day tumbling about like a young bear cub, and told her husband.

The scolding dad gave me was a caution, or should have been, had I heeded it. He ordered me to cease my nonsense. If I were weak, it was the will of God. I was to keep

quiet, submit to my punishment for my wrong-doing.

I kept up my physical training, however. For years, morning and evening, I worked like a major. I was some husky kid when I was eighteen!

I HADN'T given up my painting either. As I grew older, I was left even more to myself. My father's wife occupied a great deal of his time when he wasn't at business, and I had no close boy friend. So I used my crayons to pass my spare time and took some lessons of a man in the next town; and all this in secret.

Once in a while, and they were fearful times, I can truthfully say, I felt and heard around me presences I never saw —a flutter now and then through the room as of wings of birds, sighs, and sometimes groans that chilled my blood and made me fly for a light.

The June after my eighteenth birthday Mr. Wheeler went away, and I had the summer before me alone. I spent much time in my quarters, reading. Every book on Spiritualism I could get my hands on, I ploughed through. Next to my desire to communicate with my mother, I wanted an explanation of the pale specter I'd seen in the mystery room; I wanted to understand the strange sounds that haunted me. The horrible idea took possession of me that if I ever saw the specter again, if I looked upon her face, that day my death would come.

Whatever induced me to purchase a large, square canvas and start to paint that ghostly figure, I know not. But I did just that thing.

When I wasn't at work upon it, I concealed it behind a long tapestry; but to this day I wonder why it wasn't discovered earlier.

It was many a day before I forgave my father for what he did to it. I presume his conscience forced him to such appalling measures.

One day he appeared at my door while I was painting. The picture had grown into a woman's form in filmy, cloudy outlines, a regal head —but the face was blank.

I have never seen such an expression of scorn, anger and contempt as spread over my father's countenance. The longer he looked, the more intent he became.

"What in God's name is that?" he asked at length.

"The picture of a departed soul," I answered slowly. "I don't know what her face looks like. I intended to imagine a face if I could."

My father uttered a cry. He sprang forward, snatched up a knife, and in another moment my canvas, my white woman, was in ribbons!

That day we had a regular family fight, my father, his wife and I. Because I would not, could not, accede to their wishes, I left home.

I WAS splendidly independent of my family as far as the means to live was concerned; I had money of my own. My stepmother told me while I was packing my belongings that father never intended to have anything more to do with me.

I made straight for a colony of artists at Silver Mine, Connecticut, and there I met David Lolock, a painter, a splendid fellow, and older than I. He had brown hair and merry blue eyes, and was shorter than I was.

Some distance from his studio, I established a studio of my own and worked like a dray horse on spooky subjects which made people shiver, so I was told.

I was no longer compelled to hanker for human companionship. The colony of painters took me right into their friendship.

Among my first purchases was a fine dog—Rattlepate, I called him, and we grew to love each other like brothers. At twenty I sold my first

"Come! Follow me," said the spirit

picture. Success was coming, and I was happy in spite of my longing to be friends with my father. He ignored my letters, and at last I ceased writing. I was out on my own without a blood tie, either good or bad.

I enjoyed my friendship with David Lolock. He had no patience with my interest in the occult. He argued that it was unwholesome to meditate continually upon a subject so intimately related to death and dissolution, and which no one really knew anything about anyway.

Best of all, I met Dorothy Severance, a young writer of fiction. She had joined our colony a short time before.

INSTANTLY, head over heels, I fell in love with her. She was such a little girl, and as fair as a delicate flower with her glinting red hair and pansy blue eyes.

I persuaded her to let me paint her; and it was her coming to my studio that brought the wrath of Roland Hurlburt down upon my head.

He was not only an artist, that fellow, but he headed a higher culture cult, the members of which were making researches into Spiritualism. Naturally I gravitated their way. Roland was of a romantic, artistic type, tall, languid, and good looking. He wore his hair long, and a dark forelock was always in his brown eyes.

The very first day Dorothy came to pose, she confided to me that Hurlburt had asked her to marry him, and she'd refused him.

Things move swiftly in the land of Bohemia. Before a week had passed, Dorothy and I were fast friends. Two weeks, and we were engaged, and I was foolishly happy with my sweet little girl.

"She touched me. The specter touched me! I think it was then that my hair began to whiten. Oh, frightful fingers of ice on a man's burning face! I screamed 'Dorothy!' Then the shapely, unearthly hand moved to my mouth, two fingers tapped my lips, and—"

I recall the shocked expression on her dear face one day when I told her I actually believed in ghosts. She asked me quite breathlessly if I'd ever seen one, and I answered that I had, but I refused to explain when she begged me to tell her about it. She disliked and feared my pictures, which always were of strange, occult subjects.

One day Roland Hurlburt invited us all to attend a Spiritualistic sitting of some kind to be held at a house in Greenwich, Connecticut. The house was owned by a friend of his, Samuel Thorne, who was advanced in the phenomena of the supernatural. At my suggestion, Hurlburt included David Lolock in the party.

How many times afterwards I wished I'd turned down that invitation! If I had known—if I had dreamed of the horror, the grim, tragic episode which was to crush me with its cruelty, I never would have gone.

Dorothy said at first that nothing could induce her to have anything to do with such things. She'd much rather not go, but finally she consented to be one of the party.

It was arranged that we should spend the night at Thorne's. So there were five of us, Dorothy, Bella Green, David Lolock, Roland Hurlburt, and myself in my automobile when we started off for Greenwich not long after five o'clock, to be in time for a seven o'clock dinner to which we'd been invited.

OUR hosts greeted us: There was a Mrs. Thorne, a gentle, pale woman; a daughter about thirty—she was as white as wax too—and then Mr. Thorne, a man who made not the slightest noise when he walked. He was emaciated and thin. I never saw so much pallor of skin in one family.

We were piloted to our rooms. Dorothy and Bella were to occupy adjoining chambers in the front. David's quarters and Hurlburt's and mine were on the other side of the house near the rooms occupied by the Thornes.

I walked down the stairs with Dorothy after we'd dressed for dinner. How beautiful she was, that little girl of mine! She slipped her hand into the crook of my elbow and clung to me. She whispered that there was something about the house that scared her, and she wanted me to take her home. She was a baby after all, I thought with a mental smile.

Only one unusual thing happened during that dinner hour; a swift, rapid, and knowing look was exchanged between Roland Hurlburt and the silent butler. Infinitesimal was the time it took for their glances to meet; over before a cat could blink its eye. A quick wonder went through my mind as to the meaning of it. Then, during the conversation about occult experiences with Mr. and Mrs. Thorne, the occurrence went from my mind. After dinner we had a séance in the library.

We sat, silent, through the usual table rappings and other ordinary phenomena. But as the clock struck midnight, a faint, pale light came up near the window. It rose from the floor apparently. A shimmering light it was, and it gathered slowly as you've seen the mist gather in valleys. It hung in the air, part way to the ceiling, like a ghastly veil with rhythmic undulations between which drab and awful faces appeared and vanished. I felt as I had that night in the mystery room. It was a horrible sight.

Dorothy was silent. All the rest were too.

Suddenly in the midst of that awful quiet Miss Thorne, the pallid daughter of the millionaire, gave a groan. Then she collapsed in her chair.

"Hush!" whispered Mrs. Thorne. "Now we'll get something."

"Bob!" The word came from Miss Thorne's lips.

There was a movement around the table. Dorothy clutched me by the arm, and, shaking like a leaf, I clasped her hand and held it.

"Bob!" repeated Miss Thorne, deep in her throat.

"I'm here," I answered, and I was hoarse.

MY eyes were bulging out of my head. I felt something press against the back of my chair—something like a body. A fearful shudder attacked me as I stared at the Thorne girl.

She was uttering unintelligible words in a voice without a human note in it. Suddenly she said in a sharp voice, and quite distinctly:

"Bob! Go, beware, danger!"

Dorothy cried out. She sprang to her feet, clutching at me. I put both of my arms around her, and David Lolock switched on the light. Miss Thorne sat up and asked what was the matter. Dorothy was crying, her head against my breast. Bella Green was whispering to David Lolock. Roland Hurlburt stood by his chair, frowning. The Thornes only remained seated.

Within a few minutes the party broke up. The Thornes and Dorothy and Bella retired. The three of us, Hurlburt, Lolock and I, remained in the library.

After chatting a few moments, Hurlburt vowed he was tired to death and took himself off to bed.

Outside, a spring storm was raging, one of those electrical storms for which the Sound country is famous. Lightning zig-zagged across the dark sky, (*Continued on page* 89)

The SOUL in the Shady Elm

"She was embracing the trunk of that hypnotic old elm—why?"

By Stanley Daniels

NONCHALANTLY I swung along the road. With free and easy stride I soon left the hamlet far behind. Casting a contemptuous glance at the overcharged clouds above, I pressed my hands further into the depths of my greatcoat pockets. Did a storm threaten? What did I care? It was good, this pedestrian exercise. It was good, this damp air of the fall. I was breathing the air of a new freedom—freedom from the terrifying results of shell-shock.

At last I had a grip on myself. There was determination in my set jaw now. Health fairly radiated from my spare frame. Vague anxiety and nervous trepidation were wraiths of the past and had long since been dismissed to the limbo of forgotten things.

Ah! What foolish optimism I had then. Little did I dream of the weird and nerve-shattering adventure that awaited me that evening; a dreadful experience which sent tottering to ruin, the walls of resurrected fortitude.

A stranger in this wilderness of a country, I was indifferent to the geographical lay of my surroundings. Every road was a road to health because I could walk upon it and feel my strength growing.

With a zest for living, I struck across country, leaving the level road for exercise of a more energetic nature. The ground commenced to show a rugged aspect as I climbed the rise of a hill. Reaching its crest, I became aware that I would have to cross a deep depression if I wished to continue my journey.

I hesitated at tackling so strenuous an undertaking. I deliberated whether I would be fit for the return trip. A glance at my watch revealed the fact that the hour was late. My comfortable bed at the village inn seemed to beckon invitingly. As I stood gazing down into the valley, my cheerful spirits began to evaporate. The hollow presented the most dreary and melancholy of views. An air of unnatural quiet brooded over it. Even the last rays of the sun failed to remove this significant impression. It was sad and awful. Rounded rocks, covered with lichens and ferns, fallen monarchs, moss-coated, but added to its gloomy distinction.

Contiguous to my left, a winding disused path ran down to the bottom of the vale. It wound and twisted between huge lumps of naked stone that frowned upon its sides.

But what chiefly attracted my attention was an enormous elm which grew at the lower end of the track. In its solitary state it appeared as ruler supreme of the valley. Its branches were poised in sinister fashion over what was apparently a human habitation. Strange, that this shack did not arrest the eye at the offset. (*Continued on page* 81)

What unearthly power could make a woman lavish affection on a tree?

What is the SECRET

The account of an amazing evening Houdini, witnessing the astounding

As told by
Author of "Life Secrets

PHOTO BY
BUTLER, CHICAGO

Houdini, known the world over for his magic and for his fearless exposure of fraudulent mediums, declares: "Rubini is one of the most extraordinary mind readers in the history of the world"

MY telephone was ringing impudently.

"Helloa!" I said, not too pleasantly, for I had settled myself for a comfortable evening, reading the new issue of GHOST STORIES magazine.

"Helloa! Is this Samri Frikell?"

"Yes."

"This is Houdini!"

I was delighted to hear from Houdini, the great foe of the fraudulent mediums, one of the foremost magicians of modern times. In his voice there was a ring of excitement.

"Have you ever heard of a man named Rubini?" he asked.

"Rubini?"

"Yes."

"No."

"Well, Rubini is one of the most extraordinary mind-readers in the history of the world!"

"A mind-reader?"

Knowing the fundamental skepticism that is an inherent part of Houdini's make-up, I could not keep the surprise out of my voice.

"Do you mean to say you think he's a real mind-reader, Houdini?"

The magician chuckled.

"That I refuse either to affirm or deny," he countered. "You can make up your mind for yourself about that. I want you to see him."

"Is he in New York?" I asked, my interest rising. Any new experience with mediums, mind-readers, anything occult always stirs an old fever in my blood. It is like the smell of powder to an old war horse.

"He is sitting beside me now, in my home," Houdini assured me. "I am inviting a few friends in and I would be glad to have you join us."

"I'll be there—within the hour," I promised him.

Houdini lives on West One Hundred and Thirteenth Street, in New York City, in a dignified old stone-front mansion that gives no hint of the weird wonders practiced, or the extraordinary relics collected, within its walls. This was not my first visit to the abode of the mystifier; yet the house always exerts a new spell with each visit. Verily, the ghosts of old conjurers and old magicians seem to glide up and down its corridors and stairs, with feet that make no sound upon the floor. For Houdini is a collector—he has the letters and the wands and the apparatus of sorcerers and sleight-of-hand men of many times and climes. As I trudged up the stairs— he was waiting for me in a room just under the roof—I fancied that behind me crept the stout spirit of Cagliostro; and out of the dark shadows of landings and balustrade peered the phantom faces of Herrmann the Great, of bald-headed Kellar who is no more, of my own great ancestors, Wilbalja Frikell and Samri S. Baldwin.

It was a queer company gathered in a queer room, when I entered among them.

Amid cabinets and filing cases of historical, magical, and Spiritualistic data; models of new illusions; trunks, bookcases; a tangle and a jungle and a confusion of relics and documents, were Houdini and three guests.

"Meet Doctor A. M. Wilson," said Houdini, and I shook hands with a grey-haired, active, old gentleman whose reputation among American magicians is second to none. Everybody in magic knows Doctor Wilson. He is a physician of Kansas City, Missouri; but more than that, he is the owner and the editor of the monthly *Sphinx*, an organ of conjurers whose influence among the magic arts is indisputable, and undeniably for the welfare of those arts.

"And meet Mr. Elmer P. Ransom," continued Houdini.

I HAD often heard of Ransom—a magician of the old school; but I was now to learn something new about him. Houdini explained that Ransom was the original lecturer for the Fox sisters—and the Fox sisters, as every student of Spiritualism knows, started the modern ghost furore, years ago—and are still a subject of dispute. Some day I hope to induce Mr. Ransom to write his experiences with the Fox sisters for this magazine.

# of Rubini the Great?

spent at the home of the illustrious feats of a master mind-reader

Samri Frikell
of a Spirit Medium," etc.

"And," concluded Houdini, "meet Rubini!"

I found myself shaking hands with an interesting young man, well under thirty, with waving hair of gold and intent eyes of a baffling and inscrutable expression—I think that is so because of their bland innocence and good-humored earnestness. He spoke with a pleasant foreign accent.

As we chatted together—a woman writer from Boston came in to get some information about the Fox sisters from Ransom; Houdini was answering three telephones, and Doctor Wilson was chatting with him between calls; and a girl secretary came and went, gliding noiselessly like a young and wistful spirit—I learned a little of Rubini's activities. He was from Chicago; he entertained professionally there with his telepathic demonstrations, and he had journeyed to New York to attend the annual dinner of the Society of American Magicians—the same magnet that had drawn Doctor Wilson from Kansas City.

It was nearing midnight before Rubini gave a demonstration. In the meantime we had talked of strange and singular mysteries. Houdini had told of his twenty-eight compacts with friends and relatives who had died; compacts for spirit communications—but that is another story. It is Houdini's, not mine, to tell, if he will ever tell it.

"Let us go downstairs," suggested Houdini finally, "and witness what Mr. Rubini does."

I wish there were space to describe the front room of the lower floor of Houdini's house—an odd mixture of precious pictures, rare and fine old furniture, magical curios, and a bronze bust of himself which will some day repose above his grave. Also, there were original letters of Cagliostro there, written from his prison. But that, too, is another story.

This can be only the story of Rubini.

SEATED comfortably about the room were the host and his charming wife; Doctor Wilson; Mr. Ransom; the secretary and one of her friends. Rubini stood in the center of the room, facing us, addressing us.

He said that there were two kinds of people who watched his work. Some believed he was a fake. Others believed he was a wonder. Both were wrong. He was a psychologist, and his work had a scientific basis.

"You have all heard of muscle reading," he continued. "In muscle reading, the medium, or psychic, leaves the room. The rest of the company hide an object. The sensitive returns, and takes one of the company by the wrist. He feels the pulse-beat and the instinctive muscular reactions of his companion, and by letting himself remain passive, he finds the hidden object."

Rubini paused a moment, and then said quietly:

"That is what I do—but I do it without contact."

This simple statement interested me, as it would have interested you, profoundly. If this man could do what he had just said he did do, would not that be genuine telepathy? At least, must it not be some device infinitely more subtle than the subtle methods of muscle-reading?—a subtlety so refined, indeed, that it would border close to actual thought transmission?

PHOTO BY DE GUELDIE, CHICAGO

Rubini the Great, from whom few secrets are hid

But Rubini was explaining his work still further.

"I must ask you," he said, "to co-operate with me. You must guide me mentally every step of the way. If you want me to find a coin, hidden under the carpet, you must stand beside me and say to yourself, 'Rubini, walk toward the door.' If I start in the wrong direction, you must say, 'Rubini, that is wrong. Stop! Go to the left!' Step by step, you must tell me what to do—go ahead three steps; stop, turn right, bend down, pick up the carpet, there! If you do not do that for me, I shall fail. But be very careful. You must not nod your head up and down or sidewise when I am right or wrong. You must not whisper, 'Yes, yes, that is right!' You must not convey to me by any facial sign whether I am failing or succeeding. But you must think—You must mentally order me what to do. Now I shall retire from the room, and you can arrange the test."

When he had left us, we had an impromptu conference to decide what the test would be. (*Continued on page 92*)

Child or Demon—WHICH?

"THE soul that builds itself a habitation and then refuses to dwell in it generally has some good reasons of its own. It is those reasons that we are seeking."

Doctor Martinus spoke these words in the little back study of his dingy brown-stone house in the Seventies, New York City. His head was held high, the thin brown beard projecting aggressively, the pale blue eyes fixed half-anxiously, half-quizzically, upon mine.

I had first come into contact with him when, as a newspaper reporter, I was sent to report—and incidentally to ridicule—certain phenomena alleged to be produced by a woman medium whom he was then sponsoring.

These phenomena were inexplicable to me, and to the other newspaper men present; but, unlike them, I refused to pre-judge the case in accordance with what was expected of me. The result was a quarrel with the Editor, and my resignation from the paper. Subsequently, after a visit of curiosity that I paid Doctor Martinus, he offered me the post of secretary.

A Dutchman by birth, with small private means, he was engaged at the time in investigating a certain branch of psychic phenomena which required the services of a literary assistant. As a result of the reputation he had acquired, he was occasionally called upon to solve certain of those phenomena which persist in cropping up, even in these days, to disconcert materialistic theories.

"Branscombe," he would say to me, "sooner than strain my imagination by postulating a universal conspiracy among mediums of every nation to deceive the inquirer into believing in a post-mortem state, I would swallow the ten thousand witches that danced upon the point of Albertus Magnus' needle."

This remark was called forth by my suggestion that there was nothing mysterious about the case we were considering.

"After all," I asked, "what have we except an imbecile child, and anxious parents who have perhaps imagined more than the facts warrant? As for the dead woman's curse—well, may that not have worked upon the mother's mind and so have affected the child's mentality?"

"BRANSCOMBE, if you knew—if you only could know the thirst for experiences of a soul rushing to incarnation, you would see the fallacy of your suggestion. Life—the one great desire of all souls whose cycle has brought them back to earth! Life—which fills every void on land or sea, or in the air! And you suggest that the soul which built the body of that imbecile child is kept from occupying it because a vicious woman cursed the mother!

"No, Branscombe! Given the normal, healthy brain that the Adrian child possesses, it would require something more potent than the mother's imagination for that brain to be left soulless. You are acquainted with the facts?" he continued, turning upon me full-face, and looking me straight in the eye—a habit he followed frequently, and at unexpected moments.

"Not altogether," I said. "The mother seemed incoherent, and——"

"I should have taken you to Yonkers with me on that first visit of mine, but I was anxious to have you work out those data on prevoyance. Well, here it is on the card. The father, Richard Adrian, is branch manager of a life insurance office, a prosaic enough occupation. Presumably he receives a fair salary, and owns his own home at Number 100 Clinton Avenue, Yonkers. From there he commutes to the city daily. The wife is a charming and intelligent woman. They

What terrible influence could cause the spirit of a demon to lodge in the heart of an innocent child?

By Eugene Branscombe

As told to Victor Ronsseau

have been married for ten years. In spite of their intense longing for a child, they never had been blessed with one until eighteen months ago, when a healthy boy was born.

"Both parents adored little Robert," Doctor Martinus went on. "It was not until he was nearly a year old that they began to suspect there was anything wrong with his mentality. And the mother insists that the child was normal until a certain date. She can fix that date very clearly in her mind. And by the way, little Robert is not an imbecile, as you suppose, Branscombe."

"What then?" I asked.

HE went on more earnestly: "Branscombe, there is no doubt that this Adrian child has brought into this world a great deal more than the normal outfit with which the new-born human being is usually equipped. You know I base my theory of rebirth principally upon the fact that every human being comes into the world equipped with a set of tendencies and instincts that they have acquired in some former phase of existence. How otherwise can we explain the fact that a Bach, a Shelley, appears in a commonplace family, a Rachel is born into the home of a small trader, a Shakespeare in the family of a small town haberdasher?

"But, under normal circumstances," the Doctor continued, "all these tendencies are so wrought into the physical structure of the child that they appear only as unconscious instincts, and for the most part, after maturity—in other words, after the soul has finished building its house and is ready to resume its activities. In the case of this child there is evidence of a rather horrible purpose, as if incarnation had been devoted to one special end and plan.

"I shall not go into these details. You shall see and form your own opinion tomorrow night when we go to Yonkers to make our first attempt to unravel this psychic mystery. But the date from which Mrs. Adrian reckons the first appearance of these traits in the child is the anniversary of her sister's death."

"I did not quite gather the details of the curse that the sister placed upon the mother," I said to Martinus.

"The sister was several years older than Mrs. Adrian. She was a morbid, imaginative, and embittered old maid. Years ago she conceived the idea that Adrian would have married her, and that her sister had stolen him from her. She cursed Mrs. Adrian on her death-bed, a time when all the powers of the soul are capable of peculiar concentration. She predicted that if Mrs. Adrian ever had a child, it would be an imbecile, and would be the greatest misery to both its parents that they would ever experience throughout their lives."

She cowered there, shrinking back, terror-stricken——

I had seen enough of Doctor Martinus' work and methods to be prepared for some extraordinary experiences at Yonkers, but the habit of scepticism was so ingrained in me that I persisted in attempting to apply the current methods of

psycho-physical diagnosis to this case. Certainly the surroundings were not of the kind commonly associated with the super-normal. The Adrians had a pretty, commonplace, little house, surrounded with a low privet hedge; it had two rooms and a kitchen below, four bedrooms above. The furniture was of the usual instalment-house type—a hire-purchase piano, with "The Rosary" and "Danny Boy" on top, a radio set, and a potted fern upon a mahogany-finished stand in the front window.

WE arrived just after dark. Mrs. Adrian came to the door, a dish-towel in her hand, unfastening her apron with the other. She looked at us nervously, and I observed how worn and haggard she appeared—far more so than on the day when she came to Martinus' house.

"Please come in, Doctor Martinus," she began, not very cordially.

"Allow me to present Mr. Branscombe, my secretary," said the Doctor, for Mrs. Adrian was looking at me in a questioning manner.

She bowed rather frigidly and, with what appeared to me to be hesitation, conducted us into the living-room. Here Adrian, a man of about thirty-seven or eight, was standing beside a chair, on which lay the evening newspaper. If Mrs. Adrian appeared haggard, Adrian himself seemed nervous almost to the point of insanity. His eyes were never still, and he started violently as Martinus tripped over the frayed edge of the Wilton rug.

"Mrs. Adrian's hand in mine grew tense. She was breathing convulsively, almost as hard as the medium in the cabinet. That shape, that terrible shape, was floating toward the half-circle. Suddenly I saw its face—and I was gripped by an uncanny terror!

"'Emma!' shrieked Mrs. Adrian: 'Emma!' and fell back, fainting, in her chair."

"This is my husband," said Mrs. Adrian. "Richard, let me make you acquainted with Doctor Martinus. And Mister —Mister——"

"Branscombe," I interpolated. She had forgotten my name already.

"DOCTOR MARTINUS, I—I didn't know my wife went to consult you," began Adrian hurriedly. "This is all —well, it wasn't with my approval. I'm a practical man, and I don't believe in such things. They're all imagination. There's nothing the matter with Bobby, except that he's—well, he's——"

Martinus remained silent, his pale blue eyes fixed upon Adrian's. He had all the aspect of the practitioner listening to a refractory patient and at the same time observing him closely.

"How long have you suffered from this insomnia, Mr. Adrian?" he asked, ignoring our host's remarks.

"I—why—did you tell him we suffered from insomnia?" Adrian queried, scowling at his wife.

"Please don't resent the question," and Martinus smiled blandly. "To the professional man the symptoms are unmistakable. If it were only insomnia—well, there's an easy remedy for that."

"What do you mean?" Adrian asked.

"It looks as if they've set a trap for you—and caught you, Mr. Adrian. Both of you," the Doctor added, turning slightly toward the woman.

"They? A trap? Who? What trap?" Adrian almost shouted.

Martinus laid a hand upon his arm. "My dear fellow, how do they trap bears and other animals? By setting a trap along their runways, don't they? Similarly, when you pass into sleep, you leave your waking consciousness along a certain well-mapped route that you've always followed, thinking it is the only road. Well, they've put their trap there, and they catch you in it every night, and——"

He broke off. "You must learn that there are other roads, my dear fellow. Don't be like the frog that bit eight times in succession at the same piece of red flannel with a hook in it, before it learned it was not a fly. Come, let me see that boy of yours."

I expected an outburst of fury on Adrian's part. Instead, after a moment's hesitation, he subsided with a shrug of his shoulders. "Take these gentlemen up, Thyra," he said. "I guess it won't do any harm. Things couldn't be worse."

I had no idea what little Bobby Adrian would look like. I was afraid of seeing something grotesque or horrible. He was a boy eighteen months old, asleep in a crib in a very ordinary bedroom, close to the double bed in which his parents slept.

A pretty child he was, with flaxen hair and the silky skin of infancy, asleep with one hand underneath the face. The only thing amiss with him was that he appeared to be too fat, too red-blooded, for such a baby.

I like fat babies, but it was clear, even to my unskilled eyes, that there was something amiss with this one. The blood ran so red beneath the almost transparent skin, the lips were so scarlet. The child at once attracted and repelled me.

But the transformation in Mrs. Adrian's face as she bent over the crib had in it something of infinite pathos. Gone was the anxious, harassed look that I had noted downstairs; in place of it was the touching solicitude of the mother, that infinite yearning toward the child that makes a mother's devotion one of the finest things on earth.

As she leaned over the crib the little boy opened his eyes and smiled at her.

Mrs. Adrian looked up at Martinus, tears trembling on her own lashes. "He's always like this, so—so different when he first wakes up," she whispered.

"Yes," said Martinus softly. "They can't trap him—where he goes. 'In heaven their angels do constantly behold——'"

Suddenly, in an instant, the expression on little Bobby Adrian's face was changed. In place of it appeared a cunning smile, a leer that seemed to convey some dreadful knowledge. Then, as if seized with a convulsive spasm, he jerked himself upright in his crib, screwed up his face at his mother, and struck at her.

HE mouthed, grimaced, and then watched the result, his eyes following Mrs. Adrian as she stepped quickly back to the far side of the room. She cowered there, shrinking back, terror stricken—could a demon take possession of an innocent baby?

At the same moment Richard Adrian appeared in the doorway. He had seen the incident, and now strode forward and confronted Martinus. "You see, he's always like that!" he exclaimed. "He hates his mother. Sometimes I wish he was dead. He's possessed, if ever a child was."

"Yes, he's possessed," answered Martinus, "but so are we all possessed. Every time we let our passions ride us. The veil is very thin. . . ." (*Continued on page* 86)

Sheltered by a SHADOW

Pretty Doris Miner stood on the brink of a disaster worse than death. Out of the Great Beyond came a sheltering shadow, and then——

By Doris Miner

As related to Emil Raymond

THE love that once I felt for Jerome Benton is dead. The foolish passion that would have spoiled my life is gone; swept away in one hideous night, the memory of which shall always linger. Gone too is the headstrong pride and stubborn folly that led me almost to the brink of disaster. That dark night at Cliff Haven, with its weird and dreadful happenings, has left a mark on my life which time will never efface. It found me selfish and conceited, a spoiled, petulant child; it left me humble in mind and chastened in spirit, a woman who had grown suddenly old.

For how can I say, after that mysterious adventure, that we are ever masters of our fate? What unseen powers watch over us from an unknown world, to save us at some critical moment from ourselves? To some the warning may come as instinct or sudden intuition; others may find it in deep thought and careful reasoning; to me it came like the hand of fate itself.

To understand it or explain it are beyond my powers. I only know that something awful and mysterious came forcibly between Jerry Benton and me. It overwhelmed me with horror, and even now I cannot recall that night without a shudder. Ages ago, it seems; and it is with something like a shock that I realize that it was only last summer that my foolish infatuation ran its brief course and met its dreadful end.

Yet as I made the lonely desolate trip to Cliff Haven just a few weeks before, there was no thought in my mind of the horror that was to come. My mind was filled with impotent fury and resentment. I had been forbidden to see any more of Jerry Benton, and my parents had exiled me to Cliff Haven for the summer. Exile it was; nothing else, for the old rambling country house far up on the coast of Maine was not the sort of place to which my friends would come. I glanced in bitterness at Aunt Betsy, close-lipped and severe, on the seat beside me, and I recalled the scene that had preceded my going.

It was seldom enough that my parents interfered with the friendships I had formed; yet they had protested loudly when they discovered I was going about with Jerry Benton. They gave me no reason, and to my eager impulsive mind there could be none. To me he was the only man that ever existed. Older by ten years than the college boys who had been my companions, Jerry had the distinction and poise and knowledge of the world that so fascinate a girl. He was already tremendously successful in business, and when he began to shower me with attentions I felt I was the happiest girl in all the world. I knew nothing about him save that he was rich and handsome and that I was strangely stirred by him.

Who—or what—had made that warning cross upon my bedroom floor?

That was enough. My mother spoke to me first; and then my father. Jerry was too old for me, they said; and I was far too young to be thinking seriously about men. I scorned even to listen to their words. Mother was old-fashioned, and what could Father know, busy with multiplying the famous Miner fortune? I, Doris Miner, his only child, would do as I pleased. I laughed and made new dates with Jerry——

UNTIL one day they sent for me in the library, and I found the three of them, Mother, Father and Aunt Betsy. Their looks were gloomy and their manner stern. I knew that I was in for it at last.

"We've been greatly worried about you, Doris," said my mother sadly. "You've refused our advice, and we've decided, your father and I, that you must not be permitted to run wild any longer. We've arranged for you to spend the summer at Cliff Haven. Aunt Betsy will go with you——"

But here I broke in with a cry of astonishment. "Cliff Haven? That hole! Why, what do you think I am?"

I got no farther than that. With a look on his face that I had never seen before, Father raised his hand for silence.

"You'll do as we say, young lady! We've made up our minds. So you'll keep silence, please, while your mother tells you what's to be done."

"I heard a cry from Jerry . . . Quicker and quicker flew the car, with that terrible ghostly hand at the wheel steering—God knows where . . . It tugged at the wheel, tore it from my grasp. There was a sickening lurch, and then——"

I listened in growing anger, for it meant the wrecking of all my plans. I had arranged to visit friends at various mountain places and seaside resorts, and this sudden decision of my parents was a cruel blow. But I was helpless. If I disputed or tried to disobey, they said, my allowance would be cut off and my car taken from me. My wardrobe was already being packed.

So two days later I was on my way, with Aunt Betsy as my keeper for the summer. I had managed to let Jerry know where I was going, and he had promised to come. Whether I could see him was a problem, for I knew Aunt Betsy would not permit me to write to or receive letters from him. The whole family seemed in league against him for some reason. To me it seemed like persecution, and I was filled with futile indignation.

We were met at Bassett, the nearest station on the railroad, by Adam Hopper, the old caretaker who had been on the place for years. Soon we were seated in the carriage with the horses toiling slowly up the steep ascent to Cliff Haven. At another time I might have admired the charm of the scene, for the rugged coast line is truly beautiful. The crags rise almost perpendicularly from the waves, and the booming of the sea can always be heard. It was late afternoon, and already the mist was sweeping in. Like a cloak that was being unfolded, it crept into gullies and crevices, rising higher and higher up the cliffs. By the time we got to Cliff Haven the place was enshrouded in the fog.

I had never seen the old country place, although it had been a family possession since grandfather's time. There was an old story of another aunt of mine, a sister of father's and Aunt Betsy, who had perished up here in some tragic manner. I had never been told the story, and my dead Aunt Muriel was a name that had never been mentioned except in whispers.

As I saw the house now for the first time, its air of gloom and desolation cast a spell upon me. Low and rambling, and half crouching among the rising rocks, it seemed a leaden color in the mist. Shutters hanging crazily by one hinge barred most of the windows, and the roof rose in grotesque peaks that gave it an eerie appearance. Thick fir trees and pines surrounded it, and a faint smudge of smoke trailing from a squat chimney was the only sign of life. It was lonely, grim, and rickety, and it weighed down my already sullen mood.

ADAM HOPPER opened the door of the carriage and silently waited for us to step out. As I descended into the stone-paved yard, a huge black dog bounded out of the gloom and sniffed at me suspiciously. I am not afraid of animals, but the hostile look of the beast and the unexpectedness of his approach gave me a start. I shrank back and half stumbled against the carriage. The old man turned to me resentfully.

"Ye need na be afraid o' Smoky; he'll na touch ye 'less ye give him cause."

I reached out my hand to pet Smoky, and he soon made friends with me. It seemed to make my reception at Cliff

Haven a bit more pleasant. I helped carry my hand baggage into the house, and there I met Mrs. Hopper, who, with Adam, would be our only servants for the summer.

Time passed slowly enough in my first weeks at Cliff Haven. The loneliness was terrible, for there was no one to be friends with. The shore was bleak and desolate, but by climbing down a tortuous path that wound for half a mile down the cliffs, I could come at last to a sheltered inlet where one could take a dip in the surf. There was a weedy tennis court behind the house—and no one to play with. There were books enough in the library, however, and I took refuge with these for hours.

Gradually I came to look for companionship to Aunt Betsy. We never had been warm friends, but my anger could not hold out against the constant oppression of solitude. I had to have someone to talk to, and I turned to her in spite of myself. But the only real joys I had were my letters from Jerry. I have said that I was forbidden to write or receive letters from him. I found an easy way to disobey that order.

I felt a phantom hand upon the wheel—and still I could not tell what the presence meant

Aunt Betsy was a poor enough jailer, and I mailed a letter to Jerry from the post-office at Bassett, telling him to direct his answers to general delivery. Every day I could depend on finding a long, loving letter from him, and the walk to Bassett gave me something to do. Jerry was coming up to stay at Bassett when he could get away from the rush of business, and with high heart I waited for his arrival. It was the only thing that made those first weeks endurable.

It was one afternoon not long after our arrival that I found myself with Aunt Betsy in the little churchyard that occupied a nook in the hills near Bassett. We had passed the chapel often on our desultory walks, but never had gone inside the stone-fenced yard. On this occasion Aunt Betsy's thoughts seemed to be far away, and she walked slowly along the gravel path that led inside. As she paused beside a gray granite tablet that rose above a little mound of earth I stole a look at her. Her eyes were filled with tears. Never before had I seen her give way to emotion, and curiously I glanced at the unpretentious tombstone.

THE inscription read, "To the memory of Muriel Miner" and the date of her death, thirty years before, was carved beneath. I had a strong feeling of awe in the presence of all that was left on earth of the aunt that had always been a vague and distant figure to me. Something led me now to ask about her.

"Why have you never spoken to me about her, Aunt Betsy?" I asked. "I know she died young, and that it was a terrible blow to you and father. Won't you tell me something about her?"

Aunt Betsy brushed the tears from her eyes. "I must have been dreaming, child! What ever made me come in here?"

She started sadly out of the church yard, but at the entrance gate where a huge rock was carved into a sort of bench she paused and looked at me solemnly.

"You're old enough to know, Doris," she said thoughtfully. "Perhaps the story of dear Muriel will help you with your own troubles. If you want to hear it, I will tell you the story." I could see she was deeply moved at the recollection.

"We were a happy family, Doris; your father and Muriel and I. Your grandfather, whom you never knew, was wealthy for those days, and gave us all the opportunity for life and gaity that there was. We led a cheerful life in Boston, and Muriel, with her vivacity and charm, was a favorite in our crowd.

"In the summers we would come up here. Cliff Haven was a delightful place in those days; people didn't care for noise and bustle; they wanted to get away from all of that and spend a really quiet summer. Cliff Haven was always bright enough; we had big house parties and the place was full of guests, the rooms ringing with joy and laughter. Your father had many fine young friends that he would bring up here, and Muriel and I had no end of fun. Then when he got married, we two girls had the place pretty much to ourselves; our married friends would be here for chaperons, and plenty of young people too.

"It was one summer, shortly after your father married, that Muriel fell in love. She was transformed by it, Doris; I never have seen a girl so radiant, so beautiful. The man—I shall not mention his name to you. (*Continued on page* 78)

MARRIED

A true account of the

There Clifton Carroll, dead one year, was wedded to the lovely spirit, Bright Star

A DEAD lover, a spirit bride, and their baby—these were the principals in the famous Carroll case. And here for the first time is the true and complete story, written by one who actually saw the materializations of the three figures.

The newspapers of the entire country published columns about the truly astonishing wedding in the spirit world, which was actually celebrated in New York City. The wedding was followed by the birth of a child in the spirit world a year later. Its christening was held at Niagara Falls, in the presence of

After DEATH

sensational Carroll case

By Arthur Leslie

a body of New Yorkers, some of whom probably are still living, although the principals of the strangest and most amazing story that ever graced the front pages of metropolitan newspapers, have long since passed away.

The writer was just a boy at the time of these happenings, and never has written this almost unbelievable tale before. Yet the following facts—the actual names and dates of the occurrences and the yellowing pages of the newspaper files of the *New York Sun*—attest that the wedding and christening are matters of record.

With my parents, I lived in the rooming house at Number 251 West 23rd Street, New York City, which still stands, and which was, at that time, conducted by the medium who played such a prominent part in this true story. It was here that I saw, with my own eyes, the spirit forms of young Clifton Carroll, his spirit wife and their ethereal offspring.

Can a Ghost Love? Marry? Have children? Before you say "No," read this story!

GEORGE D. CARROLL, who lived in the middle eighties of the last century, was a well known New York business man. He was a member of the firm of Dempsey and Carroll, Society Stationers and Engravers, who were then located at Number 36 East 14th Street. The establishment extended through the block, and divided with Tiffany the cream of the printing for the Four Hundred.

Carroll was a man of fifty, short, thick-set, and of great personal charm; it was he who met the leaders of society of that day and advised with them as to the correct wording on the latest engraved stationery for all the social functions, invitations to betrothals, weddings, balls, and parties of the period.

Carroll was always faultlessly attired and his suave and ingratiating manners made an abiding impression. He was regarded as a clean cut man of business, who had built up a prosperous clientele by practical attention to detail. Therefore his intimates were more than surprised to receive the following wedding invitation:

> **Mr. George D. Carroll**
>
> **Requests the pleasure of your presence at the marriage ceremony of his son**
>
> **MANFRED CLIFTON**
>
> **to**
>
> **Bright Star**
>
> **On the eve of Dec. 9, 1884, at 119 East 28th Street**

Now they all knew that young Carroll had died on December 9th, 1883, in Yonkers, New York, at the age of twenty-eight years, just the year before. He had been the pampered son of a father who had lavished all the good things of life on his idolized boy.

To say that Carroll senior's business and social friends were taken aback is to put it mildly. They were shocked. Only his Spiritualitic friends thought the approaching wedding within the bounds of possibility. It also was noticed that the name of his wife, Mary E. Carroll, did not appear. Everyone was puzzled. What they did not know at that time was that Mr. George D. Carroll had fallen completely into the toils of Mrs. T. B. Stryker, a medium.

Mrs. Stryker, as I remember her, was a very attractive woman. She was then under thirty years of age; she possessed a rich, creamy complexion, dark wavy hair, a plump figure, languorous eyes shaded by long, dark lashes, and a most engaging manner. She had lived in Brooklyn for several years before coming to New York City and her husband's earning capacity had never been more than that of a clerk.

One day while she was walking down Fifth Avenue, in New York City, she accosted Mr. Carroll, senior, who was walking a little in front of her, with these well-chosen words: "Pardon me, sir, but I see a spirit hovering over your head. He calls you 'Pop' and says, 'Why don't you listen to me?'" Young Clifton Carroll had been in the habit of addressing his father by this abbreviated form of endearment, and Carroll, whose dead son had become an obsession with him, became greatly interested.

With financial aid from Carroll, the medium and her husband were moved across the bridge from Brooklyn, and installed in sumptuous quarters in East 28th Street, near Madison Avenue. Here Carroll, who had never been accused of being a voluptuary by those who knew him well, was a frequent visitor. The medium, Mrs. Stryker, held almost nightly séances, at which young Carroll's materialization took place. The elder Carroll and his boy's spirit spent many happy moments here. Carroll would leave his office, where his acumen as a hard-headed business executive never was questioned, and repair to the apartment of Mrs. Stryker, there to commune with the departed.

At one of these séances, which took place in the darkened parlor of the medium's apartment, the dead Clifton, speaking through the medium, confided to his father that he had fallen in love with a young woman, who in life had been an incipient poetess and who had entered the spirit realm about the same time that he had. Although he had never known this spirit maiden while they were earthbound, yet his attachment for her, when once he had met her in what he described as the "inner circle," rapidly ripened into love; and he now wished to enter the bonds of matrimony with "Bright Star," which was her spirit name.

FURTHER details as to Bright Star's history, when inhabiting her clay tenement were not vouchsafed. To Carroll, senior, the son's wish was a command. Nor did his son's desire in the matter strike this prosperous man of business as strange or unusual. For once having accepted the fact that he was in touch with his son, he believed all communications conveyed through the medium as gospel truth.

The preparations for the wedding (*Continued on page* 94)

The PHANTOM

Doctor Blitz puts to the test his back to earth

By Fulton Oursler

A STARTLING mystery overshadows the life of Ted Marston, New York representative of the H. H. H. Music Roll Company. His beautiful stenographer, Peggy Lanville, disappears, and Miss Browning, who is Peggy's successor, finds written on Peggy's address card the terrible words, "Cancelled by death." What can these words mean?

Just before closing time on the day the uncanny message is found, Miss Browning also disappears. Marston, deeply puzzled, keeps a dinner engagement at the home of his fiancée, Aileen Grey. He is obliged to leave very suddenly, for——

Before dinner is over, word comes that Peggy Lanville's body has been found on the floor of Marston's office. She has been murdered.

Back in his office on the Fifteenth floor of the Waningo building, Marston is quizzed by Guy Turner, a detective of the Homicide Squad. Casey, the policeman on guard in the outer office, goes into hysterics. He claims to have seen a headless woman writing at the typewriter, and someone—or something—has left a terrible message from the dead, on the machine. Another frightful note is found under the body of the murdered girl. Apparently it was written for Ted. It says she is in trouble—terrible trouble—and that he must marry her. The net tightens about Ted.

Back at the dinner party, Grey's guests, which include Doctor Blitz, a psychic investigator, discuss the murder of Fanny Levering years before—a murder which never was solved. Doctor Blitz's medium suddenly appears among them. She is in a trance, and has a message from the dead for the doctor. And that message takes the whole group of guests, except the medium, down to the Waningo building, where Ted is undergoing a merciless grilling. Turner, the detective, laughs at Doctor Blitz's offer to call on the spirit world to solve the two crimes—the murders of Peggy and also of Fanny Levering, which were committed in the same rooms of the Waningo building.

Turner's refusal to listen to the ghost hunter is strength-

"Look, Mr. Pomeroy! Oh look! What is that?"

of the Fifteenth Floor

vaunted power to make the dead come to accuse the living

ened by the appearance of Spider Dan, alias Harry Summers, Police stool pigeon. He accuses Ted of giving Peggy poisoned candy, and Ted can not explain. Ted is held for murder. After a tempestuous

argument with her family, Aileen leaves her home with Doctor Blitz, determined to solve the mystery and free Ted. They go straight to the apartment of the murdered girl—and there they run into someone strangely familiar, who also has broken into Peggy's apartment. The man carries a package and a bundle of letters and he is——

Gilbert Pomeroy, trusted family friend of Aileen's father, and one of the dinner guests of the evening.

GILBERT POMEROY!

She could see him—with her own eyes! There wasn't any doubt about it. There couldn't be any doubt about it. She was not suffering from any delusion. It was all real—and ghastly true. Gilbert Pomeroy was standing there, waiting for the elevator, and under one arm he had a framed photograph, wrapped loosely in paper, and in his other hand was that bundle of letters.

What could it mean? Was it possible that Gilbert Pomeroy, a wealthy and respectable business man, a gentleman past middle age, had been interested enough in this case to try to play detective on his own initiative? Was that why he was here, in the dead of the night, removing property from the apartment of the murdered Peggy Lanville?

The assumption seemed preposterous.

Yet what else could she think? What explanation would possibly fit such an unexpected fact?

Suddenly Aileen remembered the sinister figure that had hidden in the shadows of the street below—the dark and cowering man who had hidden behind the tall brown-stone steps and watched Gilbert Pomeroy as he approached this apartment house.

Who was that lurking man? What was he hiding for? Why had he watched Mr. Pomeroy?

Aileen shook her head impatiently. It was all so mysterious. It had been difficult enough before, but this new complication almost dazed her.

Then, suddenly, a new determination came to her. The man in the corridor was Gilbert Pomeroy. There was no doubt about that. And he was a friend of her father and the whole family, and had been their friend for more than fifteen years. Why should she hide from him now? In a moment the lazy black boy in the lobby would bring the elevator up to this ninth floor, and Gilbert Pomeroy would get into it—and the opportunity to speak with him, to confront him, would be lost. He might easily deny, if he had cause to, that he had ever been in Peggy Lanville's apartment. Even if he were here on purely innocent matters, he might walk into trouble when he left the building, for Aileen still had an uneasy hunch that the cowering man was still concealed behind those steps—watching and waiting—for what?

Like a flash, all these thoughts raced through her excited mind, and in another instant her hand was on the knob of the door. She was about to turn it when another hand, a cold and moist palm and fingers, closed around her waist.

It was the hand of Doctor Antonio Blitz.

"Stop it—what are you doing?" she breathed hoarsely.

"You mustn't open that door," he said quietly.

"But I want to—let me go—I want to get to Mr. Pomeroy," protested Aileen.

"But my dear——"

With a fierce wrench, Aileen freed her hand and turned the knob, flinging the door back with a rush. Out in the corridor she hurried, and stood before the astonished Gilbert Pomeroy.

The surprise of the man was staggering.

Over his face crept a pallor, green rather than white, and round beads of perspiration gathered on his cheek bones, as his dilated eyes surveyed her. He took a step backward, as if he had need to regain his balance.

"Mr. Pomeroy!" murmured Aileen, not knowing what else to say.

He did not reply, but continued to stare at her, while the most tragic expression gathered in his eyes like a cloud. Aileen was wondering if old Doctor Blitz would now open the door and follow her into the corridor, but the ghost-hunter remained silent and invisible behind the closed door.

"Mr. Pomeroy," repeated Aileen, regaining her courage. "Can't you speak to me?"

There was a clicking sound as the elevator came to a pause, and its door slid back under the press of the black boy's hand.

"All right, Mr. Gorman," he said wearily.

Gorman! The name echoed and resounded through Aileen's head like a bursting shell. Gorman! Pomeroy was known in this apartment house, not as Pomeroy but as Gorman! What did that mean? What could it mean, but——

THERE was not a moment to waste. Gilbert Pomeroy was swaying toward that open entrance into the elevator. She must hold him here——

"Mr. Gorman!" she exclaimed, using the name that she had heard from the elevator boy. "You mustn't go just yet—I've got to talk with you. And if you won't wait—I'll go with you!"

She had trapped him. She saw that clearly enough—though she could not guess a single explanation for the man's amazing conduct. Why, only a few hours ago he had been a guest in her home; they had all been chatting together at the dinner table, and he had even accompanied them when they went down to Ted's office and talked with Detective Guy Turner.

"All right, Blinky," said Gilbert Pomeroy, "I'll ring for you later."

The negro, with a resentful stare at having been disturbed unnecessarily from his switch-board slumbers, closed the door, and they heard the elevator descending.

Aileen confronted Gilbert Pomeroy alone.

In that singular moment, a new sense of self-reliance came to her. For most of her life she had been very deferential to Pomeroy as a friend of her father; a man who was a very dignified and important visitor in her house and who had a habit of bringing her occasional presents and chucking her under the chin. She had never really liked him, but she had always stood a little in awe of him.

Now, for the first time in her life, she found herself at a distinct advantage with Pomeroy. He was afraid of her. He did not know quite what to make of her. Through some extraordinary accident, for which, it was plain to see, he was unable to account, she had found him in a place and under conditions when he did not want anybody to see him. Gradually the pallor was leaving his face, and he was beginning to think and think hard.

Aileen realized this and she knew she must do quickly whatever she should do, if she wanted to find out the reason for his presence there.

She forced a smile.

"Mr. Pomeroy," she said, "doesn't this strike you as very extraordinary?"

He cleared his throat hoarsely.

"What are you doing here?" he asked. "Does your father know you are here, Aileen?"

She laughed.

"Does anybody know you are here, Mr. Gorman?" she asked, deliberately taunting him.

"You don't understand," he said quickly.

"Doctor! Isn't this your medium?"

"I have a perfectly good reason for being here."

She saw that he was rapidly regaining possession of his poise.

"What reason could you possibly have for being here, at this hour—and in view of all the circumstances, Mr. Gorman?" she countered, again stressing the name sarcastically.

He drew himself up with his familiar dignity, which, however, suffered because of the letters he held in his hand, and the framed photograph under his arm. Aileen was looking at these letters and the photograph, her eyebrows uplifted, and he shifted uncomfortably.

"I do not know that I am called upon to explain my actions to you, Aileen," he told her.

"To me? Why should you?" carolled Aileen. "I was only thinking that I got here just a little in advance of the police. When they come——"

Again that pallor! Again that startled look in his eye; that white and searing glare of fear as he glanced quickly at the elevator!

Pomeroy was a badly frightened man; Aileen could see that.

"No you don't!" she said. "I don't care if I have known you for fifteen years—I don't care if you are a friend of ours—I don't care for anything—my boy is behind the bars on account of this business. You give me those things and you come back here and tell me what this is all about—or I'll scream so loud and so long that the whole place will be aroused. If you play the game with me, you'll be all right—but I've got you now and I don't let go until I know what's what!"

POMEROY was a little breathless from the frantic shaking that Aileen had given him; quite taken aback, too, at her vehemence and the utterly unexpected muddle in which he now found himself involved. Although he was a widower, and had been for the last ten years, he knew enough about women to read the glitter in Aileen's eyes correctly. There was no mistaking how in earnest

"Look here, Aileen," he said, "You don't understand. I'm not afraid of the police—they couldn't do anything to me—except to give me a lot of publicity in the papers. That's all I am afraid of. My business here is all right but I've got to go now—and you had better go, too."

"Not I!"

Aileen shook her head decisively.

"I am sticking on the job until Ted is cleared," she told him. "And I'm going to find out who killed that girl. You could have been in the same fix as Ted is, Mr. Pomeroy—you can see that!"

"I?"

"Sure! You look guilty, whether you are or not. What are you doing, sneaking out of this apartment with property that belonged to that girl. Give them to me!"

"What?"

"Give them to me!"

"Aileen—have you gone suddenly out of your senses?"

"Give those letters to me—and that photograph. I might need them. . . . I want them!"

"Aileen—I don't know what in the world this is all about. If you're crazy—that's your father's business, not mine. Under any other circumstances I would take you right home, if I had to carry you. But I can't delay now—it's too dangerous. I'm going!"

Aileen ran and seized his coat in a fierce grip.

"Hush! Not a word . . . I found her here in a trance."

she was. The very set of her jaw showed determination.

"All right!" he said. "Let's go inside . . . if you must. . . . I'll tell you what I can, Aileen . . . but can't you understand when I tell you that everything is all right?"

Aileen had been thinking rapidly (*Continued on page* 51)

He Had to PAY the

Captain Guilford Walton watched the later, came an avenging Shade to The Nine-

CAN hate last beyond the grave? Can an avenging haunt of the dark past return to destroy its own destroyer?

As a fictional narrative, the story of Captain Guilford Walton would prove fascinating; but the truth of the tale was attested by actual eye-witnesses, and as a record of actual fact it holds its own with the wildest imaginings of Poe or any other writer of bizarre and terrible tales. Surely truth is stranger than fiction.

The old Walton house of old New York was built by William Walton, a merchant prince, in 1752, according to the *History of the Chamber of Commerce*. He died, childless, in 1768, leaving his estate to his grand-nephew, William Walton. The latter joined the British during the Revolution, and his estates were in part confiscated. His children went to England, and one of them entered the British navy.

The house was erected in the fashionable suburbs of the city, in the locality now known as Franklin Square. The mansion was surrounded by spacious grounds which sloped down to the East River, affording a fine view of the fields of "Broekellyn," as the place opposite was called by the Dutch settlers of a former day. At the time when the eighteenth century was drawing to a close, it was believed that the Walton family had become extinct; but suddenly a member of the ancient house appeared. He was a British sea-captain, and his coming made a sensation in the society of New York, which at that

Nine-Tailed CAT

man he hated die. And then, years exact payment for the cruelty of— Tailed Cat

By Arthur Leeds

time was limited to Wall Street and the lower part of Broadway.

Captain Guilford Walton proved to be an intelligent and agreeable gentleman, who might have been called good-looking had it not been for a peculiarly sinister expression which marked his face when it was in repose, but which passed away as soon as he began to speak. The prestige of his name and rank—not in the Royal Navy, but in the merchant service—rather than any reputation of wealth that he brought with him, at once commanded access to the best society of the city. Captain Walton was received among the Hamiltons, the Crugers, the Gracies, and the other aristocratic families whose mansions fronted the Battery, or were to be found nearby in Broadway or Greenwich Street.

HIS own residence, the old Walton House, was no longer in a fashionable neighborhood, but was occupied by a well-to-do family, who were glad to let a suite of furnished rooms to a gentleman whose name was identified with the house.

Unlike many sea-faring men, he led a quiet, orderly life, and it was noticed that he gradually cultivated a recluse habit. When he did mix with gay society he seemed to show that it was the opportunity for sharing its excitement, rather than ordinary social intercourse, which he craved.

Suddenly his engagement to Miss Anna Barrington of Spring Street was announced.

Captain Walton became a constant visitor at Kirtle Grove, as Miss Barrington's home was called. It was about a mile from the captain's rooms in the old Walton mansion, to the home of his fiancée. It was his custom to take a short cut through several new streets, then half built up with small wooden houses. This path ran from Kirtle Grove to Broadway, and thence across to Mulberry Street, which was hardly more than a crooked highway, skirting the Collect, or pond, which covered what is now the site of Centre Street. One night, shortly after the engagement was announced, he remained unusually late in company with his fiancée and a woman friend. The conversation had taken a religious turn, and Captain Walton had rather shocked Miss Barrington by his flat denial of the evidences of revelation, as well as by ridiculing her interest and belief in the supernatural and the marvelous.

It was one o'clock before the captain bade the ladies good-

"I see him! I see him! God be merciful to me! There is no escape!"

night and commenced his lonely walk homeward. As he walked on Mulberry Street, passing some unfinished houses surrounded by heaps of brick and mortar, his steps, in the almost oppressive silence of the moonlit night, seemed peculiarly loud and distinct.

SUDDENLY it occurred to him that he was not alone. He seemed to hear other footsteps regularly falling, and nearby, too—not more than a hundred feet behind him. It could not be the city watch, for this was off his regular beat, which did not extend so far from the Park. Someone, he felt certain, must be "dogging him." This suspicion aroused, he turned to confront his pursuer.

Instantly the other footsteps ceased. The moon shone brightly—and not a soul was in sight. Walton concluded that the footsteps he had heard must have been the echo of his own, but when he stamped violently on the ground, and then walked rapidly to and fro, he failed utterly to awaken any echo.

Concluding at last that the whole affair was an illusion he resumed his journey. Before he had proceeded a dozen paces the mysterious footfalls were heard again in the rear.

There seemed to be a fixed purpose to prove that they were not an echo, for the steps were varied in a very peculiar manner. They slackened almost to a halt; then there would be a series of eight or ten rapid strides, followed by a slow walk. Once, as Walton suddenly increased his pace, he distinctly heard his mysterious "shadow" stumble. Such a sound, he reflected, was thoroughly and convincingly material.

A bold, practical man, he again and again faced suddenly about, hoping to surprise the shadow, but on each occasion he was disappointed. He retraced his steps and made a careful search of the neighborhood; but nothing resulted. As he resumed his walk toward Chatham Street, it flashed across his mind that some of Miss Barrington's beliefs were taking hold of his imagination. In fact, for the first time in his adventurous life, a genuinely superstitious feeling began to creep upon him. He was forced to admit to himself his disturbance of spirit.

His nervous tension at last caused him to turn suddenly and cry out:

"Who goes there?"

There was no answer; and then, more from a determination to shake off his pursuer than from actual fear, he broke into a run. At once he heard the clatter of someone of equal speed maintaining the usual proximity.

HE resumed his walk—and so did his pursuer. At last he reached his dwelling. The footsteps ceased as he crossed the threshold of his door.

He sat before the cozy fire in his room until three in the morning. His skepticism had not vanished, but it was considerably shaken. He began to feel at least the suggestion of the presence of the unseen world.

He was a long while falling to sleep, and rose the next day at a late hour, in a distressed and nervous frame of mind. He was doing his best to reason the matter out on natural lines, when Fensford, his servant, handed in an ordinary-looking letter, addressed to him at Walton House, which read thus:

> You appear not to recognize me, but perhaps you may when we see more of each other. Meanwhile it is hardly worth while for you to be so shy. However, I will advise you to keep clear of Mulberry Street, unless you wish to meet
>
> THE DETECTIVE.

Walton read the curious message several times. The handwriting was strange to him—the rude, coarse hand of an illiterate person; yet the wording showed a certain amount of education. Was the writer a friend or a foe? If the missive came from an enemy, why should the unknown send a warning? If from a friend, why should he indicate that Walton had reason to fear him?

Again, what could the term "detective" mean? Could it mean a shadower—a following Nemesis? Walton felt that the whole affair was a complete mystery—and one which he decided to keep from his sweetheart's knowledge, in spite of the fact that, as evidence of possible supernatural manifestation, it undoubtedly would interest her.

"There came a momentary silence, which was broken by a scream of agony, appalling and hideous. Driven by ungovernable horror, the servant tried to open the door, but he was too paralyzed with fear to turn the knob . . . What was happening in that guarded room?"

At any rate, on returning from his next visit to Kirtle Grove, he carefully avoided Mulberry Street. In order to do this, he took the broad highway (now Hudson Street) on the North River side of the city.

ON this occasion, he neither saw nor heard anything to disturb him. His nervousness and apprehension were wearing off, when——

About ten days later, he went to the old Park Theatre—then the only playhouse in New York—with Miss Barrington and her father, and after seeing them start for home in their carriage, Walton turned down Beekman Street.

It was one o'clock as he started home along the almost deserted street.

Suddenly, as on that other memorable night, he became aware of the sound of steps following him. The street was quiet and deserted; no form was visible.

As he reached St. George's Chapel, he noticed that the steps were keeping perfect time with his own. Shortly afterward they changed, and, as on the previous occasion, seemed sometimes slow, sometimes lagging, then hurrying in a run until the usual apparent distance lay between them.

The captain, by this time, was thoroughly a victim of nerves. He hurried on, the relentless tread always behind him, until once more he had reached his home. He was in such a disturbed mental condition that he did not even attempt to lie down, until after daylight had come. He was awakened by his servant bringing the morning mail.

Among several letters his eye instantly picked out one which at once increased the feeling of dread which had gripped him throughout the long night. It read:

> Do you think, Captain Walton, to escape me? You may as well escape your own shadow. I will be with you when I will, and you shall not only hear me, (*Continued on page* 83)

In Terror of LAUGHING CLAY

No scientists experimenting ten thousand years could make a lump of potter's clay live—and yet——

By Mark Shadow, *Ghost Hunter*

As told to Robert W Sneddon

I WHISTLED softly as I read the name on the card. I had met John Ralston several times, but never on a friendly footing, for his antagonism to anything pertaining to occultism extended to those who affected any interest in the subject. He was prepared to back his opinion on ghosts with a standing offer of $10,000 to anyone who could convince him that there was anything more than fake and trickery in the phenomena of the supernatural. And no one had ever won the $10,000.

I have devoted myself to a study of those occult occurences, so apparently mysterious and in most instances not to be explained, but which I am convinced we shall in time discover to be natural in their operation. In fact, what started as the hobby of an amateur has developed into a profession, and I am called upon to investigate many instances of so-called "hauntings." The name of Mark Shadow is familiar to research societies both here and in Europe, though no doubt most of you read it here for the first time.

I was surprised to get Ralston's card as I sat in the study of my little house in West Eleventh Street. He was the last man likely to call on me, and I was puzzled as to what could have brought him, but I told my secretary to show him in at once.

Ralston strode in, aggressive, heavy of tread. Only his manner lacked something of its usual arrogance.

"I daresay you're surprised to see me, Mr. Shadow," he said bruskly "In fact I'm surprised myself, but once started on the damfool business, I decided to go on. You busy now?"

"Not particularly," said I. "You don't want to consult me professionally."

"Something looked at her—something hideous, with staring eyes!"

"We've had several tilts in the past, Shadow," he answered with forced familiarity, "but forget that. You're the sanest of the crew, that's why I picked on you to hear my story."

"Much obliged," I said with a grin, "What's your trouble?"

"I want a plain talk with you, as man to man. You can charge what you want, so long as you can solve a problem or two to my satisfaction."

He drew out a checkbook and bent forward to my desk.

"No hurry," I said curtly. The man had an unfortunate method of approach. "Time enough for that, Mr. Ralston. Any advice I can give you is at your service, though judging from the past, I fear it won't be appreciated."

"Oh, I know," he answered, taken aback, "but we'll let bygones be bygones. This is too serious a matter for quibbling over opinions. I don't retreat one step from my convictions, but I own I'm puzzled to death. There's some trickery going on in my home, and I want to get at the root and bottom of it."

"My God! It's the hellish thing of the chest!"

"Serious, eh?"

"So serious that my wife's a nervous wreck. I've had to dismiss my servants, close up my home, and come to town. The house is new. I only moved in last year, and I don't know if I'll ever get my wife to set foot in it again. She wanted me to consult her cousin Carver."

"Carver? You don't mean Professor Joseph Carver?"

"The same. Damned, opinionated, self-deluded fool! Talking about ghosts! Bah! There are no ghosts!"

It amazed me to hear the name of Carver, a cranky dabbler in dark matters that are best left alone, even by those well informed in them.

"WHAT'S the matter with the house?" I asked.

"I want you to find out, Shadow. There's something in it that's making it impossible to live in. Oh, it's nothing supernatural. Don't get that idea into your head."

"Then why come to me? Why not get a detective?"

He gave a snort of contempt.

"I've had three of them already. Two of them couldn't find a thing. The third lit out in the middle of the night and sent me a crazy note saying he could stand up against anything he saw, but not against something out of Hell. Now I want you to come out and see what sort of a trick is being played on me."

"You believe the house is haunted?"

"I believe nothing of the sort," he retorted. "Some one is trying to put something over on me. Somebody's after my $10,000 offer, though how they got in to rig up their contrivances beats me. I'll give you a free hand. You can go as far as you like."

I hesitated. I foresaw that, notwithstanding this offer, in whatever I did I would have a wholly unsympathetic assistant.

Ralston leaned forward.

"See here, Shadow, ever since you exposed that medium in Vienna, I have had some respect for your judgment. You have some critical faculty, more than I can say for most of them. If there's trickery, you'll find it. If there's anything more, I'll listen to what you have to say. Now will you take the case?"

"If you would be more explicit." I was still hesitating.

"I'll tell you all you want after you're on the ground. I'd like to see if you can get an inkling yourself first."

"Oh, very well, I'll wait till we're on the spot."

"You'll come then?" he said, standing up with an evident air of relief.

"Why, yes."

"Good! There's a train at Grand Central, five-ten. Will that suit you? Bring a bag with you."

I met him at the station with my bag, and in my pocket a flashlight and an automatic.

We got out at Greenfarms and walked a few hundred yards to a pretentious house on the shore of the Sound, set deep in its grounds and bordered on either side by other miniature estates. He unlocked the front door and switched on the lights as we entered a wide hall, with walls of wood panelling.

"We'll have a bite to eat in the dining room," he said. "I brought a lunch basket with me. Hang your things up on the rack there, while I start the percolator."

He went into the dining room, and I heard a clatter of plates and cutlery. I walked towards the lighted door and as I did so I halted, with a decided sensation of shrinking. I looked about me sharply and found I was standing opposite a large chest of some dark wood. Prompted by an

impulse, I raised the heavy lid and peered inside. It was empty, but from it came a curious damp odor—almost like that of moist earth or clay. I let the lid fall with a start.

"Did you laugh, Ralston?" I asked sharply.

THERE was no reply, and I took a couple of strides into the dining room. As I did so, Ralston came from the kitchen beyond, with a tray.

"Did you laugh, Ralston?" I repeated.

He flashed a mirthless glance at me.

"No!" he said curtly. "So you heard it, did you? Quick work."

"I heard a laugh—muffled, I confess—but a laugh," I said.

"Near the old chest?"

"Yes."

"A mocking, snickering laugh?"

"Yes, that describes it, exactly."

"You've started well, Shadow," he said as he laid the tray on the table. "Here, have one, won't you?"

He poured a glass out for him

self and gulped it down.

"Thanks, no. I prefer to keep my head clear."

"Oh, all right. What's your idea? Something to do with the chest—some sort of radio attachment—though I've examined every inch of the chest and the woodwork of the hall."

I said nothing till we sat down.

"Where did you get the chest?"

"Came from some old house around here. My wife picked it up."

"I'd like to know its history."

He made a gesture of impatience.

"No offense, Shadow, but don't pull any stuff about old furniture retaining the atmosphere of some dark crime."

"The thing does exist, for all you profess not to believe in it," I said firmly, "however, I promise you I won't let that theory stand in the way of investigation. I have a feeling that the mystery starts from the chest. But, if you don't mind, I'm ready to hear your account of what has been going on."

"I'll give it to you without any frills, just a plain bald statement of the facts," he answered. "The business began two weeks ago. My wife and I were sitting in that room across the hall, her drawing room. It was about half past ten at night, and we were waiting for the maid to bring us some ginger ale. All at once we heard her shriek in the hall—smash went the tray—and she dived in here, in hysterics. Swore, that as she was passing the chest, the lid went up of its own accord and something looked at her—something hideous with staring eyes! She couldn't describe it. She gave a squawk, the lid dropped down, and she bolted to us screaming. I gave her a piece of my mind, dragged her out to the hall, opened the chest and showed her it was empty. But it was no use. She stuck to her story, much to my wife's amazement. Hilda had been so reliable."

"German girl?"

"No! Swedish, and stolid as they make 'em. Good servant too. That finished her. She left next day, though my wife foolishly offered to increase her wages. That night as I went up to bed, I heard the laugh. I thought the butler was responsible. He (*Continued on page 67*)

He did not realize he couldn't erase the stain of guilt without a bitter reckoning,—this

MAN Who PAID

By Jim Preston
As told to Will Whitmore

"JIM," said Professor William Arnold to me, "I am the only man in the world, I believe, who knows the truth about the murder of Bob Clark; and I would be hooted out of my office at the University if I told the truth. I don't know what to do, Jim. I am sorely troubled."

Whenever I went through Austin, Texas, I always had dinner with Professor Arnold. He is a professor of Physics at the University there, and we were college pals for three years at Princeton before he went West. It was there that I came to love and admire him for his brilliant scientific work.

On this particular night we were dining in a Chinese restaurant on Congress avenue. A newsboy came through the restaurant selling the Austin daily paper, and Arnold bought one of the papers. When he glanced at the first page, his face turned white, and his hands trembled.

I asked him what troubled him.

"Jim," he said, "Bob was killed three days ago and the police are no nearer a solution now than they were then." He pointed to a large headline on the page. It read:

POLICE STILL BAFFLED OVER MYSTERY MURDER.

I looked at Arnold and I noticed the darkness under his eyes. They lacked the luster that I had known for years, and the old assurance that I had always admired in him was gone.

"Why should this particular crime affect you so?" I asked. "Tell me about it."

"I was glad when you called me today," he replied, "for I had to tell someone what I know about this murder and I knew I could trust you. I have (*Continued on page 73*)

"In one arm her baby, and in her hand—a murderous Bohemian knife!"

The Ghost Who Stole a BRIDE

A shadow cannot kidnap a flesh-and-blood woman—and yet——

By Stanley Denton
Told by Mark Mellon

It was Beryl! Had she died? Or was this her astral body—or what?

"AND Beryl is still convinced it was a ghost?" I frowned savagely at Doctor Hugh Gifford as he sat there smiling indulgently at my wife across the table. Why in blazes hadn't the fellow tact enough to realize how terribly any reference to that gruesome business upset her? It seemed to me that three years of travel in the Orient should have given him enough colorful experiences to blot this other from his memory, but apparently it hadn't. A hasty glance at Beryl showed, as I expected, that her face had become pinched and drawn, and her hand pouring the coffee trembled visibly.

"Why bring all that up again, Hugh? It's over and done with. Let's forget it." I hoped I didn't sound too brusk. "Tell us about yourself, Hugh. We've been hearing all sorts of interesting reports of your work among the coolies, and this is the first time we've had you to ourselves long enough to hear your version of the story."

Beryl cast me a wan little smile of gratitude as Gifford launched forth on an animated account of his adventures; and the harassing subject of Cosden and the ghost was dropped. Poor Beryl! She had suffered more than any of us, though at the time we were all pretty well upset.

Curious thing about Gifford, though: he just couldn't seem to resist the urge to discuss the thing, to assure us again and again that the explanation was really quite simple—oh, quite simple. There wasn't anyone else with whom he could discuss the subject, of course, but I sometimes wondered if, instead of trying to convince us, he were not really trying to reassure himself.

BERYL is convinced beyond a doubt that the thing was a ghost and I—well, I hardly know what to think. There were so many unexplained circumstances. Take just the small matter of the bullet wounds. If there was something on the fire-escape that night, I hit it, beyond a shadow of a doubt; I wasn't a sharpshooter in the army for nothing. If, as Gifford says, it might have been the Munson woman masquerading, how did she get back to the Woodbridge place with a hole in the side of her head? And how explain the bullet wound in Cosden's chest? No, I hardly know what to think.

It was a strange case, that! I remember when Beryl first came to me with Cosden's letter I had the feeling that all he really needed was a good talking to. Our engagement had been announced in the morning's papers, and I was reading over the notices and feeling kind of happy and contented at the prospect of actually being married to Beryl, when she burst into the room all a-tremble and upset, and thrust the thing at me. It was the sort of despairing love letter a sophomore might write, and in spite of the fact that Beryl seemed scared to death, I just couldn't take it seriously. John Cosden had always been a queer chap; morose, neurotic, sort of a nut. He had been pursuing Beryl steadily for months without any encouragement from her, and it had gotten badly on her nerves. I suppose that's why this latest evidence of his infatuation upset her so badly. It seems he had read the announcement of our engagement in the paper, and threatened to end his life if she persisted in marrying anyone but him. He threatened other dire and awful things, ending dramatically with: "And I warn you, Beryl Foster, that you will never marry that man!"

Ghosts didn't carry revolvers, I told myself. . . . I whisked out my automatic . . . and——

I tried to calm her fears, but when all my arguments failed I became irritable. This thing was going a little too far, really. Something had better be done right now.

"See here, Beryl," I said finally, "I've had about enough of this chap's goings on. I'm going over there tonight, right now, and have it out with him. He's got to stop bothering you like this."

At first she tried to dissuade me. Then, when she found I was determined, she insisted upon going along. Useless to argue with her, she would have her own way; and finally we climbed into a cab and drove down to his residence. Queer-looking place it was, too. One of those old brownstone houses that started life as a mansion, and had gradually gone from bad to worse until it had become only a grubby-looking rooming house.

We rang several times before the door was opened by an unsavory-looking woman of about forty-five. She stood and glared ominously at us while we made our inquiries.

"Mr. Cosden? Yes, he lives here. Is he expecting you? Well—I guess you can come up."

She cast a particularly baleful look at Beryl, then turned and lead the way up a dark and narrow stairway. We followed her in silence to the third floor; then she stopped before a door from under which a crack of light shone steadily. Once, twice, three times she knocked in no uncertain manner, but there was no response.

"Funny!" she said. "He must be in there."

After another loud knock she produced a bunch of keys and unlocked the door. The empty room that met our gaze was a sight to behold. Cosden was a scientist and the tools of his trade—bottles, retorts, pieces of glass tubing, bunson burners—were scattered topsy-turvy about the chairs and tables. Garments were lying about just anywhere, together with untidy heaps of books and

papers; in a corner stood an untidy-looking bed, its covers half on the floor. And this was the home of the man who wanted to marry my fastidious little Beryl!

As we stood there uncertainly on the threshold, there was a sound of breaking glass in the room beyond, and suddenly the door was flung violently open and Cosden himself staggered out. Such a figure! His sloppy bow tie and wrinkled white shirt looked as though he had slept in them; his unkempt tousled hair stood up on his head in a way that gave him an uncanny look, emphasized by his pale, almost green, face, and wild, half-insane looking eyes. As he came out into the light he stood blinking stupidly for a moment, then he noticed us and for a moment he seemed to go raving mad.

"THAT'S her, Teresa, that's the woman!" His long, bony finger pointed accusingly at Beryl, and his voice rose shrilly. "She wouldn't marry me, Munson, she wouldn't —Oh, God," he broke off, "she's responsible for all this!" He waved his arms aimlessly. "She's made me the wreck I am." Then, ferociously, "She thinks she's going to marry that man, but she's not, Teresa, she's not, so help me God!" Suddenly he fell forward on his face, awkward, lanky arms sprawling above his head.

With a cry of terror, the woman, Teresa Munson, rushed to his side. "Jack, oh, Jack," she said, moaning, "what have you done? Oh, what have you done?"

She turned him over and, before I could spring to help her, she had lifted him bodily and placed him on the bed. Even at that critical moment I couldn't help but marvel at the ox-like strength of the woman.

"He said he'd do it!" She was wringing her hands and wailing. "And now he has. Oh God, isn't there anything we can do?"

I felt the fellow's pulse, but it had stopped, and already his hands were icy cold. Something in my face must have told her the truth, for suddenly she burst into wild paroxisms of weeping.

Remembering the crash we had heard as we entered, I went into the bathroom, and there on the floor were the broken fragments of a tumbler, traces of a dark liquid on some of the larger pieces. A nauseous odor permeated the atmosphere and I stepped back instinctively. Turning, I was barely in time to catch the Munson woman as she made for Beryl—Beryl who all this while had been standing in the middle of the floor as though stunned.

"It's all your fault, you huzzy!"

In another second the woman's clawing hands would have seized her throat, had I not grabbed her firmly by the wrists and grappled with her. For a moment it was all I could do to hold out against her tremendous strength, but suddenly her body went limp and she sank to the floor, repeating over and over: "Oh, God! Oh, God! What will I do!"

Poor Munson! Her story was pathetically plain. She adored Cosden, obviously, and he had taken poison because another woman refused to marry him. Rather awful, when you think about it. I hadn't much time to speculate about that right then, though, for, with a low moan, Beryl suddenly toppled over in a dead faint. I rushed to her side, leaving the Munson woman rocking back and forth, weeping disconsolately. Poor child, this had been a terrible experience for her—perhaps I had better get her away from here before I tried to revive her.

THERE had been a bed-room opening off the main hall. I remembered noticing it through the open door as the Munson woman ushered us upstairs. I'd carry her down there and then see what was to be done. I groped my way carefully through the dark halls, carrying Beryl in my arms as though she had been a fragile child, and placed her on the bed. Munson's own room, I thought, glancing hurriedly about. There was nothing unusual about it but a picture

of Cosden, that fairly leapt at me from the bureau. Beryl mustn't see that. I turned it face down. Poor fool, what a mess he had made of things! I ought to call a doctor, I supposed.

Beryl was coming to, and for the next few moments she occupied my full attention. She clung to me, weeping hysterically like a scared child, and I had all I could do to quiet her.

"Oh, Stanley, Stanley, I just knew something terrible would happen!" she said, sobbing bitterly. "Oh, it was so awful—so awful——"

"Beryl, honey, try to be calm, try to pull yourself together!" She made a heroic effort. "I'll phone Hugh Gifford to come over. Maybe (*Continued on page 70*)

The Girl Who LIVED

If beautiful, tragic the horror that dogged would have returned

WAS beautiful Anita Kennedy in the terrible hypnotic power of a ghost? It certainly seemed so. She had been a medium of Luigi, the hypnotist, for years, and it was from his clutches that Ransom Kennedy, financier, and I had rescued her. Luigi was dead—we were sure of that. And yet——

There was no doubt that some one—or something—was hypnotizing Anita. Her trance-like condition, her utter terror, and the threatening cloud which hung over the entire Kennedy family—were these the manifestations of the power of a dead man?

Poor Ransom Kennedy! He could not give his whole mind to the solution of Anita's terrible problem, for he was being hard pressed on the stock exchange by a financier named Cullen. He received, at regular intervals, threatening slate messages purporting to come from beyond the grave; and they demanded that two hundred thousand dollars be sent to the Society for Psychical Research. And I believed that the spirit of Luigi was behind these sinister demands.

At Anita's touch, Wolf, her beloved dog, dropped dead and there were threats of another death to follow. Tragedy stalked her path—and when she finally disappeared, leaving a pitiful farewell note behind her, we were frantic. Search failed to reveal her, and heartsick, I went to my laboratory over the garage.

It was then that I heard someone speak my name——

"Come, Anita! Squeeze Cullen's wrist with your left hand!"

OUT of the utter blackness around me the whisper came:

"Ross! Ross! Are you here?"

I steadied myself and answered:

"Hello! Who is it? Yes. Here I am."

"Oh Ross, it's I, Anita. Here, at the door."

It was Anita's voice. With a throb of utter gladness I sprang up from the bed where I had lain down fully dressed, and threw open the door.

The darkness was still complete. I could not see even the outline of a figure. But out of that darkness sounded a little sob, and then a hand, groping, touched my breast.

"Ross!" came her low cry.

With a rush of glad tenderness, I reached out my arms. My hands touched her shoulders. And as if she had always belonged to me, I caught her to me.

"Anita! Anita!" I cried, and put my head down till my cheek rested against her hair.

Her forehead was pressed now against my shoulder, and her arms clung to me. The next thing I knew, she was sobbing. I didn't speak, but only held her close to me, and tried to make her feel the love and protection of my arms.

She drew a long, shivering sigh.

"Oh-h! I've been so afraid! Ross, I've been so afraid—out there in the woods all alone with the darkness all around me. Oh-h!"

She shuddered again and clung to me as if I had been a haven of refuge.

"The woods?" I asked. "How did you get to the woods? What woods?"

"Our own woods right across the road. Oh, Ross, I found myself there an hour ago—just woke up and found myself there in the darkness. I've been wandering around ever since, trying to find my way out. It was horrible to be there alone among the trees, and not to have any idea where I was; but Ross, it was more horrible to know that it was Luigi that made me go there, and that any minute I might hear his voice commanding me to sleep!"

Her words left me a bit dazed.

"But, Anita," I said wonderingly, "you went away this morning. Where did you go before you went into the

with the DEAD

Anita had known her footsteps, she never to those she loved

By
Ransom Kennedy's Chauffeur
As told by
Grant Hubbard

"Stop her! Stop her! My God, it's murder!"

woods. Did you see Luigi?" She shuddered.

"I don't know. I don't know," she whispered. "Turn on the light, won't you, Ross. I must see you before I can really believe I'm back."

I released her gently and went to the push-button. As I pressed it, and the room was lighted up, she sighed again. My heart gave a great throb of pity and compassion. She stood there, her clothes torn and soiled, her hair disheveled, and half down, her hands fluttering about her throat.

I went swiftly to her side again and put my arms around her. She lifted her wan face to mine, and it seemed to me that her big, dark eyes cried out to me for the very love and tenderness that was in my heart.

"It's so good to be here," she whispered.

"You don't know how wonderful it is to have you," I answered, trying to keep my voice steady.

SHE continued to look at me for a moment or two, and I thought her eyes repeated the message that they had had in them at first. I drew her a little closer. Then a warm color came into her cheeks and she slipped gently out of my arms.

"I — I'm tired, Ross," she said with sudden shyness. "May I sit down."

As she spoke, she dropped into a chair. But a sudden resolution had seized me. I was not going to be stopped now. I went a step nearer to her.

"Anita," I said, my voice trembling, "this may not be the right time or place, but I've got to tell you. When I said it was good to have you here, I meant good to have you back and—and good to have you—where you were—in my arms. I—I love you, Anita. I want to be able to hold you that way and take care of you and protect you always. Do you—can you——"

As I hesitated, there came a sudden step on the stair. I turned. Corbin's head appeared. The next mo-

ment he stood in the doorway. His face was grave.

"Hello," he said, "What's this? I thought you were lost, young lady."

"She just found her way back," I answered quickly.

His brows knit.

"JUST got back, eh?" he said. "Why not come to the house? Looks like something queer here."

"I meant to go up to the house and ring the bell," Anita answered. "But there was a man hiding in the shrubbery, and I—I was afraid."

"Humph!" His eyebrows went up. "My man, Jones." He paused. "Well, it sounds reasonable. But—what happened to you? You look as if you'd been kidnapped and had a pretty hard time of it."

Anita flushed.

"I don't remember anything about it," she said. "The last thing I remember was talking to you. Then I went up to my room, and—I don't seem to remember anything more till I woke up out there in the woods just across the road. I didn't know where I was at first and wandered all round for an hour or more. Then I found a place I remembered and knew where I was and came home. But the man by the shrubbery frightened me and I came over here."

"As she touched me a strange chill swept over me. I felt suddenly weak... My whole body grew rigid. It became impossible to breathe... I knew that I was dying — and at the caress of the girl I loved!"

"How about that letter you wrote? Don't you remember that?"

"What letter?" she asked wonderingly.

"The one you wrote saying that this dead man—Luigi's spirit had come to you again and that you must leave here."

She shook her head.

"I didn't write any such letter," she said. "I haven't seen Luigi's spirit at all. I haven't seen anything."

"But you told me this morning that you had seen his spirit materialize itself from some white vapor, and that then he hypnotized you as he used to."

Still she shook her head.

"But I don't think he's dead," she said. "I'm sure he's alive, and really hypnotizes me. I was probably under his influence when I talked to you this morning, if I said things like that. He has always been able to do that—make me say and do things, even when I seem awake and perfectly natural. And then he can tell me to forget all the things I've done—and I forget them, just as I have now. Oh, Mr. Corbin, you don't know what a terrible man Luigi is!"

Corbin made a gesture of impatience.

"But Miss Anita, the man is dead. I tell you I've talked with a man who has seen him dead. He can't be hypnotizing you. Now listen to me. You've got this hypnotism and spook stuff on the brain. Put it out of your mind. There isn't a man living that could hypnotize you that way now—and spirits don't walk. It's all in your mind."

SHE looked at him with a wan wistfulness that made a lump rise in my throat.

"I wish I could believe you," she said. And then, "Won't you take me over to the big house now? I want to see Mother and Father."

He nodded, considering her in a puzzled way, and walked to the door. Anita rose to follow him. Suddenly she turned back to me.

"Oh Ross," she said, and hesitated, warm color creeping up into her cheeks. "I—I—will you take me for a long drive tomorrow afternoon? I want to tell you something."

I seized her hands and looked down into her eyes.

"Yes," I said with a catch in my voice, "Tomorrow—afternoon."

The next minute she was gone.

For a time I stood there in the room, looking at the door through which she had gone, my heart beating with a wild kind of joy. Then suddenly I remembered that there was still Luigi to contend with—Luigi, and a stubborn detective who did not believe in Luigi. I hurried over to the big house.

Corbin was at the telephone, notifying the various police stations that Anita had come home and need not be searched for any more. Upstairs I could hear Mrs. Kennedy weeping in her joy, while Mr. Kennedy was clearing his throat and blowing his nose in his efforts to keep from showing the extent to which the same emotion had gripped him. As I waited for the detective to finish his telephoning, I heard the rise and fall of voices up there, and knew that for the time all was well.

But, when I told Corbin of my wish to share in the watching of the house, he refused.

"No," he said. "I'm doing all the watching that's necessary. If I should let you help, and something went wrong you'd be under suspicion. No. Go back to bed, and stay there."

I tried to argue with him. But he was firm, and realizing that after all he was undoubtedly a better watchman than I, I finally went back to my rooms.

Here, as I crawled into bed and lay thinking, my fears and doubts were soon driven out by the overwhelming happiness that I felt was in store for me when I should take Anita to drive the next day.

I SLEPT like a log till morning. Then, however, my fears rose again, and as soon as I could I hurried over to make sure that no new thing of horror had come upon us during the night. To my great relief, the night had passed without unpleasantness of any kind.

I longed to seek out Anita and let my own eyes tell me that she was really all right, but the fear that I would find her among other people, and that the emotion that was burning within me might betray itself, forced me to be content with the news and to busy myself at the garage.

Alice came over quite early after breakfast and took out her roadster. She hinted that she had been working independently on Anita's case the day before, and she was looking particularly bright and happy. She assured me so joyfully of Anita's continued peace of mind that after she had gone I had to give vent to a snort of indignation at Corbin's idea that she was mixed up in the blackmail and poisoning plot that had brought horror to our household. No, I thought. A girl with such frank, happy eyes, could never be mixed up in such an affair.

It was scarcely an hour later that Corbin telephoned me to ask if Alice had taken out a car. When I told him yes, he gave vent to an exclamation of exasperation.

"What's the matter?" I asked anxiously.

"Nothing. Only that fiancé of hers has given us the slip too. We don't know where either of them are. They may be up to anything."

I hung up the receiver and laughed to myself. I thought of the times I had talked with Hackley, and the things I had heard Alice say about him.

(*Continued on page 74*)

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SPIRIT TALES

Timely Topics of Current Interest

LETTERS written from a world purporting to be beyond the grave have been introduced as testimony in a modern Twentieth Century court room!

What is more, the spirits played a prominent part in wrecking the home life of Janet Beecher, beautiful stage star, and her husband, Doctor Richard H. Hoffman, prominent neurologist, whose recent legal separation in New York was brought about by a strange, uncanny, occult influence, according to testimony.

What part does the world of the dead really play in human affairs?

Is it possible that there are powerful and malignant ghostly entities whose jealousy of human happiness, whose desire for human suffering, brings them back to the living world to wreak their wicked will on hapless beings? Certainly there was something—something intangible—working against the love and happiness of the Hoffmans.

They met a little more than six years ago. Both possessed great charm; they were intellectual companions—strongly attracted to each other by their interest in each other's work.

And so they fell in love and married. Life looked very bright to both of them. They were madly in love, they were deeply interested in each other, they had everything to live for.

And then there came——

Out of the ether, out of the world of which we know nothing, out of the realm of the dead—a message!

It came through the hand of the bride's mother, Mrs. Oral J. Wyndham. She had been experimenting in Spiritualism for some time, and she believed she was in touch with those who had "passed beyond the veil." And she began to receive messages to be used in the guidance of her daughter and her son-in-law.

Mrs. Hoffman believed in the messages. It is notorious that the profession, as well as others who work in artistic pursuits, are also interested in the occult. Their especially sensitive minds, toned to catch every shade of meaning in their work, are extraordinarily well adapted to grasp the beliefs of Spiritualism. Accustomed to sensing rather than analyzing the meaning of beautiful words and phrases, they are quite as capable of believing in the truth and beauty of the occult without demanding proofs, as the harder headed business man or the scientist might do.

And, Doctor Hoffman was a scientist. He scoffed at the messages—his neurological studies had convinced him that the spirit messages were merely the expressions of Mrs. Wyndham's subconscious mind. Both Mrs. Wyndham and her daughter were indignant, and so were the spirits whom Mrs. Wyndham claimed had guided her hand in the moments when she was a medium for communication between this world and the next.

And the messages began to make trouble between the young people. They were decidedly critical of Dr. Hoffman and his methods. "Richard is stubborn, and must have his tests," was one of the messages—referring to the neurological tests which Doctor Hoffman had used in his work to smooth out matrimonial tangles just such as he himself was in.

When a son was born to the young Hoffmans, it seemed that the evil influences which were beginning to antagonize them might be overcome. Little Richard loved them both, and they both loved him, and loved each other.

But the trouble was only intensified. Janet Beecher; her sister, Olive Wyndham, also an actress of note; and the mother of the two young women, were members of a religious sect called the Unity Scientific Christianity Association, and there were many quarrels over the religious education of the little boy. Sensitive, charming child that he was, his grandmother and mother felt that to train him to the study of the world of the dead would broaden and enrich his life as the lives of few children are broadened and enriched. And the father was determined to bring his son up on the latest scientific methods. Many messages from the spirits are said to have come at this time, criticizing Doctor Hoffman for his attitude; and the breach widened between the couple.

And then, in 1924, Janet Beecher read a new play called "The Steam Roller." She decided that it was just the vehicle she wanted, and as she couldn't find a manager to agree with her on its worth, she got her husband to finance it. The play was not a success, and Janet Beecher sought aid from the spirit world to tell her what to do.

And then the blow was dealt, through the mysterious writings, from which the tottering matrimonial alliance of the Hoffmans never recovered. The malignant influence which seemed to be guiding Mrs. Wyndham's hand told the Hoffmans to stick it out—that the play would be a success eventually. Doctor Hoffman's funds had proven insufficient. So, under spiritual advice, Janet Beecher sought out one of his friends, who furnished $2,500 to finance the play another week. And again it failed!

Dr. Hoffman made numerous comments on the spirits—and the spirits retaliated by scathing criticism. And one thing led to another, until the Hoffmans filed suit and counter suit for separation in the New York Court.

Judge Robert Marsh, the referee in the suit, and who gave the custody of the little child Richard to his father for nine months of each year, said in his opinion regarding the antagonism between Hoffman and his mother-in-law:

"Although these two had little to say to one another, it is clear that there is no love lost between them, and I think it reasonably clear that the strong influence of the mother upon her daughter and in her daughter's affairs was the fundamental cause of the final breach. Mrs. Wyndham was constantly in the plaintiff's home, directing the servants, managing the care of the child, and even at times purchasing the food and ordering the meals. This was extremely distasteful to the plaintiff, who did not hesitate to tell the defendant so, but he got no relief except a stipulation, for a time, that Mrs. Wyndham should come to his home only in his absence.

"There has been for years a very close spiritual and mental association between mother and daughter, in which the defendant's sister shared. They belong to the same limited religious cult, called 'Unity,' and for years have in their family circle indulged to a very great extent in the pastime or practice of so called automatic or spirit writing. The hand of Mrs. Wyndham, held by one of her circle comprising one or both of her daughters, has recorded a great quantity of messages purporting to come from invisible sources. I do not find that either the defendant or Mrs. Wyndham have conscientiously shaped their conduct according to the tenor of these writings, but both the practice of spirit writing and the content of the messages undoubtedly affected the family psychology. The plaintiff was frankly hostile to the practice, while some of the writings, on the other hand, criticized his character and behavior in unmistakable terms."

And so the romance is ended, and the young people are going their separate ways again.

Did a sinister, earth-bound, evil spirit wreck two lives which might have been happy together?

Who knows?

The Phantom of the Fifteenth Floor

(*Continued from page 35*)

while he was speaking. What had she to fear? If the police did come—and she had no doubt that they would be there soon—she would tell them frankly who she was and why she was there. Certainly she was in no danger—but with Gilbert Pomeroy it might be a different matter. It seemed to her that, if it would help her investigation, she could give her protection to Pomeroy for the present by declaring he came with her and Doctor Blitz and that their mission was the same.

IN this swift, lightning thought, Aileen did not conceal from herself the awkwardness of their situation. If the police did come and find them there, explanations would certainly not be easy. The police would not like it. But Aileen—like every woman where the safety of her loved one is involved—was lawless and unrestrained.

"What can they do about it?" she asked herself. "If they find us here, we're here—that's all. I'll tell them I didn't mean to do anything wrong."

All this thinking did not require two seconds of Aileen's very valuable time. She did not release her hold on Pomeroy's coat, as she followed him back to the closed door of Peggy Lanville's apartment. But as she walked beside him, her eyes fell upon the letters he held in his hand, and she saw that they were addressed to Peggy Lanville, and that the handwriting looked like it might be the handwriting of Gilbert Pomeroy himself!

Well! Well! Well!

He was opening the door for her now, as a sudden illumination came to her mind. Could it be possible——

Aileen was a modern girl, and she was nobody's fool, but the idea that there might have been any personal connection between Gilbert Pomeroy and Peggy Lanville had not struck her until she saw the handwriting on those letters. She had heard the Broadway songs about the "heavy sugar daddies," and she had read her share of the scandals, even the murders, growing out of the night life and the underworld of the great white way. But she had never associated any such thing with this grey-haired, dignified, prosperous widower whose name was Gilbert Pomeroy, otherwise known here as Gorman.

Had Peggy Lanville been Pomeroy's mistress?

Oh, she must think this out! She must think it out quickly. If only there were time now. But there wasn't time now. The door was open, and the black cavern of the inner hallway loomed beyond.

And where was Doctor Blitz?

In the excitement of the last few minutes, she had forgotten about Doctor Blitz. He had not approved of her course: had tried to prevent her from going to Pomeroy. Now where was he—and what was he up to?

For all the apartment was dark and silent as the tomb; of the ghost hunter there was not the slightest trace.

As Pomeroy closed the door and shot the latch, thus locking them in, Aileen was considering.

Should she tell Pomeroy of the presence of Doctor Blitz? Why tell Pomeroy anything? What did anyone usually gain by telling anything? What she wanted was for Pomeroy to tell her something. She stood silent, and said nothing whatever about Doctor Blitz.

"Come in here, Aileen," muttered Pomeroy, leading the way down the corridor.

"Well, turn on the lights," pleaded Aileen, flinging off her outer wrap.

"No!"

"Why?"

"I'm not going to turn on any lights. I don't know who is watching this apartment. The windows look down on the street—and I'm not taking any chances!"

"Well, I don't want to stay in this place in the dark," answered Aileen. "The girl who lived here was——"

"Hush, for God's sake—will you. What are you afraid of?"

Gilbert Pomeroy was struggling out of his coat. In the dark, Aileen could hear the rattle of the package and letters as he laid them down.

"There's enough to be afraid of," she told him. "Doctor Blitz said——"

"Oh, damn Doctor Blitz. Do you want to listen to reason? Oh, Aileen, do forgive me. I didn't mean to talk to you like that. We're both upset. I should never have come here—I know that now. It was just a mad impulse—a fool impulse, a crazy impulse. Let me tell you and let me go in peace—won't you?"

"All right!"

Aileen, feeling with her hands outstretched in the dark, had found a chair and into this she sank quietly.

"All right," she repeated. "I don't mind sitting here, I guess. I'm pretty tired as it is. If you want to get away, tell me what you came here for—and give me those letters."

"I can't give you those letters, Aileen——"

"You haven't any right to them. The police wouldn't let you keep them."

"The police must never know they existed," he cried.

"MR. POMEROY—put up that window shade, will you? That will give us a little light. I don't like it here in the dark."

He muttered to himself, but did as she asked, and a sallow gush of moonlight streamed in, bringing the piano and a large divan into their sight. On the wall, too, Aileen could see a picture—the portrait of a beautiful girl, with sad and puzzled eyes. Instinctively she knew it was the portrait of Peggy Lanville.

"Mr. Pomeroy?"

"Yes—yes?"

"I am not a child. I'm a modern girl. You don't have to be afraid of me. . . . Was Peggy your sweetheart?"

A groan came from Gilbert Pomeroy.

"That's what I thought," said Aileen. "Did you pay the bills for this apartment?"

"Aileen—you mustn't——"

"How long?"

"About a year."

"I guess I see what was on your mind. She had some letters from you . . . and your photograph. Was that it?"

"Yes."

"Do you know who killed her?"

"Aileen—you mustn't ask ——"

"But if you knew her that well, you must have some information. Think, Mr. Pomeroy—they've arrested my Ted for this. You've got to come through!"

"I can't—I mustn't be mixed up in this thing—nobody must know anything about it—nobody——"

"Mr. Pomeroy, you're a coward—you danced, but you don't want to pay the fiddler!"

"My reputation is in danger. . . . I must protect that at all costs."

She heard him take a step forward.

"Now, I'm going," he said. "There isn't any way that I can help you. . . . I don't know anything of any value to the police. . . . I want to get out of here. . . ."

"Mr. Pomeroy!"

Aileen's voice was sharp, staccatto, filled with a quick surprise.

"Look, Mr. Pomeroy! Oh look! What is that?"

He turned and a whispered cry broke from his lips. Backward he staggered, retreating in a panic.

"Oh, my God!" he cried. "Oh, my God!"

Aileen watched in a thrilled and fascinated silence, not knowing what to fear, what to suspect, what to believe of this thing that her startled eyes had beheld.

Through a door at the other end of the room had emerged a human hand—a hand and wrist and forearm—a long and slender white hand, turning its palm toward them in the moonlight.

And the hand seemed to be floating in the air!

AS if some weird and capricious fate had arranged the coming of the moon upon them, so that its greenish beams touched that hand and forearm brightly, the veins and the flesh of the thing were bathed with the soft silver light.

In a silence born of fear, of fascination, of dread expectancy, they watched it. What was it? What could it be? What would happen next?

All the dim apartment was filled with silence and now Aileen began to wonder about Doctor Blitz. Was he concerned in this curious appearance of the hand? Where was he, anyway? Was he hiding in the apartment for his own purposes? Or had he escaped through some back door which he had found?

And then Aileen saw that it was not alone a hand that was coming toward them. Behind it there was a shadowy body; a filmy thing, that seemed to glide through the door on feet that made no sound upon the floor.

Was it real? Was it flesh and blood? Or was it a ghost?

There was a tight constriction in Aileen's throat as she watched the thing

—she rose and, with Gilbert Pomeroy, slipped back in the room. The figure was that of a woman, and it now seemed like a real woman, palpable and substantial, though it did move so slowly, so rigidly, so silently in a rhythm that must be like the rhythm of the moving dead, if ever the dead did move.

Gilbert Pomeroy was breathing heavily. His fear was increasing as Aileen's was subsiding. For her head was clearing from the daze of fright into which the apparition had first cast her. Now she believed she recognized the figure. She was sure it was Margaret Levering, the medium of Doctor Antonio Blitz.

But how had she got here? And why?

In a moment, Aileen was sure of it. The creeping woman was no more than five feet from them now, and stealthily, steadily, gliding forward. Her vision clearing as her eyes grew more accustomed to the atmosphere, Aileen saw that the whole body was held stiffly and she asked herself if there were such things as real trances, and if Margaret Levering were in a real trance.

Then, without warning, another figure moved in the gloom; a short, dark figure, the body of a man, and Aileen knew that it was Doctor Blitz. Aileen seated herself.

"Doctor! Isn't this your medium?" she called tensely.

"Hush!" he replied. "Not a word . . . I found her here in a trance. . . . She is trying to find something!"

"What is all this business?" asked Gilbert Pomeroy hoarsely.

"Sssh!" whispered Doctor Blitz again.

Now the entranced figure of Margaret Levering had turned and was crossing the living room. Moving in that same strange tread, that was like hypnosis, or, indeed, as if her body were possessed by some external spirit that guided her legs and feet across the carpet, she pursued her rigid way slowly but unfalteringly.

"I feel like this is a nightmare!" gasped Pomeroy.

Suddenly the medium gave a low moan, and they could see her arms, weaving in a kind of helpless, searching, groping gesture in the air.

"I won't! I won't! He is near now —but I won't!" she murmured tearfully.

"Tell me what you won't do!" pleaded Doctor Blitz, creeping behind her, his hand out-stretched like a mesmerist, his body bent forward.

"I won't. . . . It wouldn't be right. . . . I'm not. . . . so bad as that!" moaned the medium.

"Who is it that is speaking?" asked Doctor Blitz.

"He knows! He knows!"

"Who?"

"He! He knows!"

"You know that we want to help you?" Doctor Blitz's voice was eager, coaxing.

"I know. . . . But who can help me now?"

"We can't help you if you can't help us—you do understand that, don't you?"

"Yes. . . . yes. . . . but the head. . . . the head was never found!"

A GROAN escaped from the parted lips of Gilbert Pomeroy—a groan that struck terror to the heart of Aileen. What was it that drew such a cry of conscience, of heart-break, of utter, stark and tragic terror from the cowering man at her side.

"He knows. . . . he has not forgotten . . . . he can never forget!" muttered the medium, her body swaying in the thin spray of the moonlight.

"Won't you tell us who *he* is?"

"I am forbidden to pronounce his name. . . . it is the will of God. . . . the dead are watching the living but the living will not watch the dead!"

Doctor Blitz gave an exclamation of impatience.

"This is the end—that is the message we always get when the trance is over," he said miserably. "Courage, Margaret —now—remember——"

A shuddering cry came from the medium. She swayed and fell backward and Doctor Blitz, though ridiculously shorter than she, caught her in his arms and led her to a divan. She fell back, whimpering, and he adjusted a pillow under her, and then, drawing a decorative scarf from the piano, threw it lightly over her form.

Then, without more ado, he went to a switch in the side of the wall, the location of which he seemed to have not the slightest difficulty in finding, and turned on the lights.

THEY made a singular quartet—the four of them in that room.

On the couch lay the prostrate form of Margaret Levering, the woman Aileen had discovered on the library balcony of her own home, hours before. To Aileen's astonishment, she discovered that Miss Levering was now undressed, save for a filmy night-gown of pink silk and her stockings. To all appearances it seemed that she had been in bed, and asleep, when Doctor Blitz entered the apartment.

How reconcile that phenomenon with what she knew of the case? The mystery seemed to grow more complex with every new corner they turned.

And there beside her stood Gilbert Pomeroy, now with the damning picture and letters caught up in his hands; his face white and stricken, and his eyes haunted with an evil and terrible fear, as Doctor Blitz stared at him accusingly.

Aileen glanced from the friend of her family, the wealthy and dignified Gilbert Pomeroy, to the tense little figure of Doctor Blitz, who continued to stare at Pomeroy, while he stroked his chin whiskers and rolled his changeable eyes most amazingly.

"Doctor," said Aileen, "what on earth does all this mean?"

"I feel like asking the same questions," returned the Doctor crisply. "There is a great deal here that is absolutely inexplicable to me. What is this man doing here—and what has he got in his hand?"

"Peggy Lanville was his mistress," said Aileen cuttingly. "He came to get his picture and his letters—and he's scared stiff."

Doctor Blitz chuckled.

"There's more to it than that, Aileen," he said decisively. "Now, you will both have to listen to me. . . . I am on the trail of solving two mysteries. One of them is the murder of Peggy Lanville. The other is the decapitation murder of Fanny Levering."

As those last words left his mouth, Gilbert Pomeroy gave a perceptible start.

"Now you might as well understand," continued Doctor Blitz, and Aileen was struck at the old scientist's conscious imitation of the manner of Detective Guy Turner, "what I have done. I am a scientist—and there is nothing that I will stop at in the pursuit of truth. When I left your father's house tonight, Aileen, I knew that Margaret Levering was here. I had sent her here. I counted on luck to keep the police away for a little while —and she pretended to be a friend of Peggy Lanville, as I had instructed her. I'll tell you about that later. But what I did was to tell Margaret to get undressed, put on a night-gown belonging to Peggy Lanville and get into her bed and go to sleep!"

"My God, Doctor. . . . That's horrible! What for?"

"To try to draw the spirit of that murdered girl back into the body of my medium," responded Doctor Blitz implacably.

A CHILL seemed to blow through Aileen as she listened to the calm voice of Doctor Blitz, announcing what he had done. It all seemed so alien to the world in which she lived; a world of parties, and matinées, dances and motor rides, and summers spent in the mountains. This was almost fiendish. She remembered that on the drive down to Ted's office, hours before, her father had referred to a remark that Doctor Blitz had made—that in the pursuit of a scientific quest, he, as a scientist, would hesitate at nothing, not even murder, to discover the truth.

She did not believe it then. But she did believe it now. As if it were nothing at all unusual, Doctor Antonio Blitz had calmly informed them of the cold-blooded thing he had done.

"She has been here for hours," continued the old psychist imperturbably. "When the elevator boy said she had telephoned down to find out what time it was, he thought it was the Lanville girl, but I knew better. I knew it was my medium. That convinced me that she had not been in a trance, and yet when I arrived here, I found that she was in a trance."

Suddenly he took a step toward Pomeroy.

"It is strange you didn't see her when you came in here to get those letters and that picture," he said.

Pomeroy glanced from Doctor Blitz to Aileen, manifestly puzzled and confused.

"I didn't turn on any lights," he said. "I just went to Peggy's secretary desk there and opened it and took out the letters. The picture was on the piano. But it's queer she didn't hear me——"

"SHE was in trance," interrupted Doctor Blitz. "Of course she didn't hear you. In a little while she will come out of her trance, and then we will know the truth. In the meantime, Mr. Pomeroy, if you want to protect your own interests in this matter, there are one of two courses open to you. Either you will call your lawyer immediately, or you will talk to me."

Pomeroy stared at the Doctor insolently.

"—he came swiftly toward her!"

SHE was a terrible temptation to him—as she would have been to any man. And Zara suddenly realized that the door was shut and locked—and that she was alone with him in the room.

She stood perfectly still and watched him warily—wondering what mad thing he would attempt to do.

He came swiftly toward her, clasped her in his arms and passionately kissed her mouth.

"Zara!" he murmured hoarsely. "Do you think I am stone? I tell you I love you—madly."

"Animal!" she hissed, and struck him across the face.

* * * *

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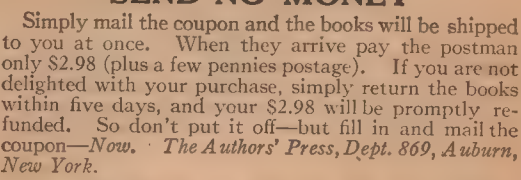

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"Why should I talk to you?" he demanded.

"For the very simple reason that I am investigating this case and want to know the truth about it."

"Officially?" and Pomeroy sneered offensively.

"No. Strictly on my own account."

"I shall certainly not subject myself to any inquisition from you," said Gilbert Pomeroy. "My errand here is ended, and I am going to leave."

"I shall inform the authorities that I found you here," Doctor Blitz threatened calmly.

"How will you explain your own presence here?"

Doctor Blitz smiled.

"That isn't troubling me," he said. "Why should it trouble you? . . . As a matter of fact, Mr. Pomeroy, let me tell you this. . . . I have direct connections with the police department. . . . I have aided them in the exposé of a number of swindling mediums in New York. . . . after the great Torrini was quite baffled and was almost on the point of believing them to be genuine, even though he wouldn't admit it. It was I, not Torrini, who exposed the famous Thompson scoundrels, who were the ministers of the First Spiritualist Church here—they had deceived even Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. I am not afraid of the police. They may be a little annoyed at me, but they will forgive me—the high officials, I mean. So don't you worry about Doctor Blitz. You had better worry about Gilbert Pomeroy."

"What do you want me to tell you?" asked Pomeroy irritably.

Doctor Blitz walked over to the couch and studied the pale face of Margaret Levering.

"She is in a very deep trance, indeed," he said, "and the only thing to do is to wait here until we see what happens. . . . Mr. Pomeroy, this is the situation. . . . If the police do come here in the next little while, they are liable to suspect you of murder. You realize that, don't you?"

Pomeroy forced a weak smile.

"You're joking, aren't you?" he asked.

"Not at all. You were here, removing material that might be evidence to the police. That is very suspicious. You have carefully withheld the fact that you even knew this girl. That, too, is suspicious. They would certainly want to question you. Isn't that right?"

"Well—what of it?"

"Simply this—the presence of Aileen and my medium and myself here can be explained. The police won't like it. The underlings may be even abusive to us. But we can get out of it all right. But you will be in a different position. Now my suggestion is that you place yourself under our protection—you will say you came here with us, and we will back you up in it, in exchange for which you will answer my questions as far as you can."

Gilbert Pomeroy nodded his head.

"All right," he said. "Go ahead!"

"When did you first meet Peggy Lanville?"

"About a year ago."

"Where?"

"In Ted Marston's office."

"Oh—indeed!"

"Yes. . . . I suppose you might say I flirted with her. . . . It began harmlessly enough. I had met Ted at Mr. Grey's house and promised to look in on him for lunch. When I got there, he was out. So I chatted with Peggy—and took her to lunch instead."

AILEEN could not look at the man. To her it seemed such a shameless spectacle—this man, well past the middle part of his life, taking a pretty stenographer out to lunch.

"Did Ted know this?" asked Doctor Blitz.

"I am sure he did not. Peggy promised to keep it a secret. Well. . . . it isn't easy to tell. . . . I was terribly infatuated with her, and saw her very frequently. . . . I made her several very valuable presents. . . ."

"Did you seduce her?" asked Doctor Blitz, his voice even and unruffled.

"I did not. . . . I hate to talk about it. . . . but Peggy had had several other . . . . friends."

"I see. . . . Why, if she was under your protection, did she continue to keep her job in Mr. Marston's office?"

Gilbert Pomeroy shook his head.

"I don't know," he said. "It was very queer . . . she wouldn't stop working. . . . She said she loved me and she wouldn't give up the idea that she was self-supporting. . . ."

"Do you mean that she really loved you?"

"I wouldn't be surprised if she did."

"Hmpf! You mean that she had a certain pride—that she did not accept your attentions for money, but because she did care for you—and she wanted you to marry her!"

"Yes—that was about it, I guess."

"Would you have married her?"

Gilbert Pomeroy snorted.

"How could I marry a stenographer?" he demanded. "A man in my social position——"

"FOR God's sake don't talk like that," said Aileen. "It makes me want to commit murder myself!"

The look that Gilbert Pomeroy turned on her was utterly without understanding.

"Any other questions, Doctor Blitz?" he asked uneasily.

"Yes. . . . when did you see Peggy Lanville last?"

"About a week ago."

"Where?"

"Right here——"

"Haven't you heard from her since?"

"No. . . . she went away, somewhere . . . . but she had a habit of doing that and I wasn't alarmed."

"You didn't know where she was?"

"No!"

"You concealed your surprise very well when you learned about the murder tonight—up at Miss Grey's home," said Doctor Blitz.

"I had to."

"I suppose you did—by the way, Mr. Pomeroy, I want to ask you another very pertinent question. Did you ever know a woman by the name of Fanny Levering?"

"What?"

"Surely the name isn't altogether strange to you. . . . I am sure I saw your face turn pale tonight when I told the story of her murder in Mr. Grey's library. . . . You heard it then, didn't you?"

"I think——"

"You know. . . . and I know. . . . And you knew Fanny Levering yourself, Pomeroy. . . . Come across, now—with the truth. What was Fanny Levering to you?"

Gilbert Pomeroy stood up, tearing at his collar.

"There's no use hiding it," he gasped. "I can read your eyes—yes—Fanny was my wife!"

THE effect of this extraordinary admission from Gilbert Pomeroy upon Aileen and upon Doctor Blitz was naturally profound.

Aileen stiffened in her chair as those momentous words came from the lips of her father's friend. Of course, it was almost incredible, but then, Pomeroy's connection with Peggy Lanville would have been incredible, only a few hours before. The man was a confessed flirt, the old-man lover of a young and beautiful girl—and with that as a premise, Aileen was ready to believe that any surprising development might grow out of it.

She had known, naturally, that Gilbert Pomeroy was a widower, but she realized now that everybody had been very vague about the late Mrs. Pomeroy. No one ever spoke of her, really; and although Aileen had visited several times at the Pomeroy place in Westchester, she could not remember ever having seen a picture of the wife.

Had Fanny Levering been the lady of those Westchester estates? And if so, why had Pomeroy's name been so scrupulously avoided in the discussions of the Levering murder and the Levering ghost, earlier in the evening.

Moreover, why was Fanny Levering living alone in a hotel, instead of with her husband, at the time of her death?

Such questions as these occurred immediately to Aileen, but before she could attempt to formulate them in an orderly procession, or to propound the first one of them to Pomeroy, Doctor Blitz had returned to his examination.

There was no doubt that the admission by Pomeroy that he was the husband of the former Fanny Levering had had an immediate and profound impact upon the mind of Doctor Blitz. When he heard the statement, he had shaken his head quickly, as does a man who is struck an unexpected blow. Then he had glanced hastily in the direction of the couch, where Margaret Levering lay, still under the somnolent influence of the trance.

"Do you recognize that young woman?" asked Doctor Blitz urgently.

"No. I have never seen her before . . . . except tonight at the Grey home."

"Probably not. . . . She has been in Australia, where she had a home, a husband and children. . . . But she came all the way to America for one purpose. . . ."

"What was that, doctor?" asked Aileen.

"To find the murderer of her sister!"

There was a stern silence, after that, until Pomeroy said:

"That woman there is Fanny's sister?"

"Yes. . . . she is your sister-in-law."

"I begin to remember. . . . there was a

sister Margaret, of course. . . . how long has she been in this country?"

"Practically ever since the murder. During her absence one of her children died. Her husband finally brought the others here to New York and they have been settled here ever since. In all those years, Pomeroy, no one ever knew that she was even in America, and she was busy trying to track down the man who killed her sister."

"Very interesting. . . . and she is a spirit medium?"

"She is. . . . The story of how she became one is very interesting but there isn't time to tell it now. . . . There is more important business here. Pomeroy!"

Doctor Blitz was now most grave, most dignified.

"Don't you think you had better tell me just what is to be told about your marriage to Fanny Levering?"

Pomeroy made an impatient gesture with his hands.

"I don't see why that is necessary," he argued. "Those are details of my private life that are very painful to me . . . . I don't want to discuss them with you, or with anybody else."

"But Pomeroy, did the police know, at the time, that you were her husband?"

"They did!"

"And the thing was hushed up?"

"Yes. . . . it cost me a great deal, but it was hushed up. . . . You see, the marriage was secret. . . . she had taken dope . . . . she was in with a bad crowd. . . . It would have been a terrible scandal on my name!"

Doctor Blitz could not conceal a sneer lurking under his mustaches.

"You certainly are proud of your name, aren't you?" he remarked. "I am to understand, now, that during that former investigation you co-operated with the police?"

"I did. They know all about it down at headquarters. It was simply a matter of keeping the thing behind closed doors, and not letting the newspapers in on it!"

"But Pomeroy!"

The voice of Doctor Blitz had now become silken, smooth and disarming.

"Don't you think it will seem awfully queer to the police—this second murder in your affairs of the heart?"

"Damn it!"

Gilbert Pomeroy shouted the curse, as he rose to his feet threateningly.

"I'm tired of this!" he cried violently. "I don't care what you think or what the police think. What in the hell right have you got to be probing at me like this, anyway?"

Doctor Blitz raised a protesting hand.

"We've been all through that," he said soothingly. "There is something more important to talk about. . . . I didn't know you had such a high temper, Mr. Pomeroy, if you will forgive my saying so!"

"I'd like to know what you mean by that?"

"Nothing in particular. . . . although, you see, Mr. Pomeroy, the circumstances are peculiar. . . . You were in love with both these women, and they were both murdered in the same room. . . ."

A bleak look came into the eyes of Gilbert Pomeroy.

"Of course!" he said. "I had thought about that . . . but what can I do. . . ."

DOCTOR BLITZ took an impressive step forward and thrust a straight fore finger at Gilbert Pomeroy.

"One thing," he said, "is absolutely certain. . . . There is an inescapable connection between those two crimes. . . . There is something haunted and sinister about those offices now occupied by Ted Marston. . . . and somewhere behind all this there is a man or a woman who knows. . . . The same hand struck down Fanny Levering and Peggy Lanville!"

"I think it is just a horrible coincidence," said Gilbert Pomeroy.

"There is no such thing as coincidence," spluttered Doctor Blitz in flushed annoyance. "The trail here is too marked for that. . . . Did you know any of Peggy Lanville's people?"

"I knew her brother."

"Oh, did she have a brother?"

"Yes. . . . his name was Jack."

"I thought you said you didn't know anything about her people?"

"I met her brother here."

"Jack Lanville?"

"Yes."

"I wish we could get hold of him. . . . he could tell us a lot we would like to know."

"I don't see. . . ."

"But I do, Pomeroy. Her brother will be willing to co-operate, because he will be as anxious to solve this as Aileen and I."

"I am just as anxious to solve it as you are," said Pomeroy with dignity, and a glance at Aileen.

"And yet the murder of your wife has remained an unsolved mystery even until this moment. . . . Let me see!"

THIS final remark from Doctor Blitz was prompted by a slight cry from the woman on the couch. As he strode toward her, Doctor Blitz turned and put a finger to his lips.

"I am sure she has not heard a word of this conversation," he said. "Under no circumstances let her know that you were the husband of her sister. . . . It might agitate her terribly. . . . she is in a profound nervous state as it is."

He bent over the prostrate form of the woman and began whispering to her soothingly.

"Are you all right, Margaret?" he asked at last.

A low sigh escaped her. The doctor smoothed her forehead with his hands, moving them gently back and forth, and in his voice, as he spoke to her soothingly, there was a surprising tenderness.

"Oh, Doctor," murmured Margaret Levering, "I'm so tired!"

"I know!"

As he bent over her then he was no longer the scientist; he seemed like a father, solicitous over the welfare of his daughter.

"Can I help, Doctor?" whispered Aileen.

He looked across the room and shook his head.

"Now, Margaret," said Doctor Blitz, "I am going to ask you to be a strong, brave woman, for I think we are nearing the end."

"You mean——"

"Yes!"

"Really—yes?"

"Yes!"

"Thank God!"

"I want you to summon all your resources, and try to remember. . . . While you were in your trance, you would not speak to me, or answer me. . . . Did you see or hear anything that you can remember?"

Margaret Levering raised herself on her elbow and looked about her rather wildly.

"This is—her room?" she breathed. . . . A shudder ran through her rather frail body. . . . "I remember. . . . You sent me here from the house where I found you. . . ."

"Mr. Grey's house. . . . yes," said Doctor Blitz quietly.

"When I got here, I found the door unlocked. . . . I told the elevator man I was a friend of Miss Lanville's. . . . He didn't seem to mind my going in. . . . I did just what you said. . . . Oh, Doctor!"

"Yes—tell me."

"I did not turn on the lights, but I found her night-gown in the dark. I undressed, just as you told me to do, and I got into her bed. . . . And then the strangest thing happened."

"What?"

"I felt myself going off into a trance . . . . but it was a different trance from any I had ever known before. . . . I was cold, and tired, and terribly frightened . . . . and my throat began to ache, as if someone were choking me there. . . . tightly. . . . and I wanted to scream but I couldn't. . . . I felt as if I were dying . . . . as if I were being choked to death. . . ."

"This is horrible!" said Gilbert Pomeroy.

"I felt hands on my throat. . . . smooth hands. . . . smooth fingers. . . . choking me. . . . and I knew it was the end of everything. . . . I didn't seem to be myself any more. . . . I was someone else . . . . I think. . . . I think I was. . . . that poor girl!"

"Never mind!"

DOCTOR BLITZ'S voice was almost womanly in its tenderness to her, as he stroked her forehead and encouraged her.

"I must tell it all now. . . . It will do me good to tell it. . . . I felt as if the life were being squeezed out of me by those smooth fingers on my throat. . . . and then I collapsed. . . ."

"And that is all?"

There was no mistaking the note of disappointment in Doctor Blitz's voice.

"That was all," replied Margaret Levering. "I didn't know anything else until I opened my eyes, just a few minutes ago!"

Doctor Blitz stood up and then walked out into the center of the floor. There he remained, staring blankly at his shoes, as if in their bright polish he might read the secret that evaded him, as the Japanese holy men read the future in their enchanted black mirrors.

"I can't understand it," he said bitterly. "It looks like my experiment has been a complete failure. . . . And yet, with a medium as sensitive, as filled with love as you are, Margaret—love for one

who has passed over—how on earth can it fail? If the dead can help the living, if there is such a thing as spirit return, here was the one opportunity for the thing to happen. Here was a crisis in the affairs of several human beings. And yet there came no sign!"

He walked up and down the floor disconsolately.

"Here," he complained, "we had an ideal set of circumstances. And yet the experiment was a complete failure!"

"Not a complete failure," protested Aileen. "You surely regard what Miss Levering said as important—the choking, the hands at her throat. Certainly that showed something."

Doctor Blitz shook his head and smiled sadly.

"No," he said. "She knew about the murder. Her imagination might easily have done that. I want direct proof—what I want is a message from the other world that will solve this murder!"

"You'll never get it," said Gilbert Pomeroy.

"What makes you say that?" demanded Doctor Blitz with a sudden and most surprising ferocity.

"Because all this stuff is moonshine," said Pomeroy stoutly. "In the showdown it simply doesn't work—as you have just proved. Now, is there any reason for us to linger here any longer?"

Doctor Blitz seemed thoroughly discouraged.

"I don't believe there is," he admitted. "When I left Mr. Grey's house I felt confident of success. I brought Aileen with me, because I thought she would be what you might call a psychological reinforcement. She has an emotional interest in this crime, and it is emotion that means most in spiritual things. I was sure that this time we would get results. I have been getting all kinds of vague messages—warnings—promptings—that sort of thing . . . but nothing definite enough. Now, tonight, I got a message when Miss Levering came to Aileen's house that there might be a third murder, if something were not done. . . . And yet, when we try to reach something tangible we fail!"

THE distress of the old scientist seemed too genuine to be assumed. He was thoroughly cast down.

"What shall we do now?" asked Aileen.

"I shall take you home, Aileen. I am sorry to admit it, but I can't do anything. Perhaps, tomorrow, after Miss Levering is stronger, we can try again. But now——"

"But now!" said Aileen, "You want to cry quits. Well, you may but I won't!"

"What do you mean, child?"

"I mean that you can go home, but I am not going home until I find out who killed Peggy Lanville."

"Aileen!"

The old scientist crossed the floor and put his hands on her shoulders, friendly and benevolent.

"If it were not so serious, little girl, it would be laughable. It is now about three o'clock in the morning—and we all are here on one of the most preposterous errands imaginable. Now you want to stay out for the rest of the night—for what? You couldn't do anything, Aileen, but make yourself ridiculous, or get into trouble!"

"I don't care what you say," returned Aileen, "as long as Ted is under arrest I am not going to sleep until I do something about it!"

"The girl is right!"

The voice was that of the medium, Margaret Levering. She had wrapped the piano scarf tightly about her, as she sat up on the divan, and her pale face seemed weird, as the glow of her staring eyes was fixed upon them.

"You said that love was the most important thing in a matter of this kind. She loves her young man. I love my murdered sister. Aileen——"

"Margaret, dear!"

"I will stay with you and help you as long as you want me, too—no matter what anyone else says!"

"Look here, you two!"

Doctor Blitz was excited. He pulled his chin whisker nervously as he strode toward them.

"Don't either of you get the idea for one minute that I am any less anxious than you to solve this crime. . . . I was simply trying to be a human being and a gentleman—but if you mean what you say, I think you are two wonderful girls—I will work——"

"May I say a word?"

It was Gilbert Pomeroy speaking, and they remained silent, for his expression was one of the most intimate interest in the subject at hand.

"YOU are perhaps thinking that I may have had something to do with this crime," he began. "But whether you do or not, I want to find out who did commit this ghastly deed, and I wish you would let me join you and help you."

Doctor Blitz shrugged his shoulders.

"If you want to," he said quietly.

"And furthermore," said Pomeroy, "I have a suggestion to make that may appeal to you. It is simply this. When we are laying our plans for the rest of this weird night, wouldn't it be well to get in touch with someone in the Police Department? Doctor, you said you had friends down there. I know two important men myself. Why run the constant danger of getting ourselves misunderstood, when we can cooperate with them?"

"The trouble is—we haven't any plan. We don't know what to do next," said Aileen. "If we do go to the police, we have nothing to offer."

"We have my medium," retorted Doctor Blitz, with some asperity.

"But your medium hasn't done anything. No medium has ever done anything," declared Pomeroy, with impatient positiveness. "You can't expect the police, or anybody else, to take this medium business seriously until you have produced results. We do know a few things they haven't found out, I imagine. At any rate, I'm all for joining hands with the police and not conducting this investigation alone. Now that I've got this picture and these letters, I am not afraid of their getting anything on me—I am ready for anything."

There was a moment's silence while they looked at each other in an exceeding perplexity. It remained for Aileen to break that puzzled quiet.

"It seems to me," she said, her brows knitted into a frown of thought, her eyes studious and serious, "that what we need more than anything else is to take stock of where we stand. We know where the police stand. They think Ted did it. And I suppose they may have him down at Headquarters now, putting him through the third degree that I have read about in the newspapers. As long as they think Ted did it, they are not bothering about any other clues——"

"That is typical of the police," said Doctor Blitz.

"Just the same," pursued Aileen, "there are a lot of clues that no one has paid any real attention to at all. Ted was talking to me while we were down at his office there, and he told me as much as he could in the limited time he had to talk to me. And the things he told me throw an altogether different light on the case. Now Mr. Pomeroy here has come into the matter and he complicates it, too.

"Now, let me tell you the questions that are bothering me; questions that I believe will show who really did this crime, or maybe both these crimes, if we can only find the answers."

"Go ahead," said Doctor Blitz approvingly.

"WELL," said Aileen, "first there is the question of where Peggy Lanville was during the days that she did not appear in Ted's office. She was there on Monday night for the last time until her dead body was found there tonight. That is one of the most important questions to be answered."

"That's right," said Pomeroy, and Doctor Blitz nodded his head emphatically.

"In the next place," continued Aileen, "there is a third woman who figures in this case and who has received precious little attention. That woman is Miss Browning. Early this afternoon Ted engaged her as Peggy Lanville's successor. She disappeared out of his office. She left her coat and hat behind her—but she, herself, was absolutely gone!"

To this Doctor Blitz made no comment, but Gilbert Pomeroy glanced uneasily around him, as if the recital of this multiplication of mysteries was getting on his nerves.

"Then," resumed the young girl earnestly, "I believe that that man Harry Summers needs looking into. The police seemed to know him and trust him, but that doesn't mean a thing to me. I am not going to eliminate anybody from my calculations on this night—not even myself!"

"Yourself!" exclaimed Gilbert Pomeroy. "Be serious, now, Aileen."

"I am perfectly serious. . . . I had a motive for killing Peggy Lanville."

"You?"

"Yes—I. How do you know I didn't do it? I was not at home at the time she was killed. I was walking up from down-town, and there isn't anybody I can bring forward to prove it."

"But you had no motive!"

Aileen laughed.

"You don't know how jealous I am," she said. "I never liked Ted being alone all day in the office with such a pretty girl. I merely say this——"

"Oh, it's perfectly ridiculous," said

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Doctor Blitz. "Go on, though, my dear. I like to hear how you check off these various things that we have got to find the answers to. Go on, now!"

"I insist that somebody ought to explain the friendship between Harry Summers and Peggy Lanville. Suppose that he was guilty. Wouldn't it be smart of him to plant that poison candy stuff, just to get himself off? There's a lot to be done in finding out about Harry Summers!"

"I agree with that," said Doctor Blitz.

"From now on," continued Aileen, "we come to mysteries that are much more unbelievable. There is that death card, for instance. I told you about that, Doctor Blitz."

To this again Doctor Blitz made no reply.

"It is a very queer piece of business for the line, 'Cancelled by death' to be written under Peggy Lanville's name—before she was murdered. Something deep lies behind that card; it is one of the most important clues in the whole investigation.

"And then, who should walk into Ted's office but the girl's brother? And what has he got in his hand? A bottle of tears! How can the police ignore a bizarre thing like that? 'These are the tears she shed before she died!' Whoever wrote that knew that she was going to die, didn't they?"

"PERHAPS," said Doctor Blitz. "Although I can see another explanation of that. . . . However, proceed. There will be time enough afterward to go back and study each of these questions. I am making a little note of them here in this notebook, so that we won't forget any of them. They are very valuable, Aileen," he continued patronizingly.

"There is a great deal more," returned the girl, not altogether pleased at the tone of the old scientist. "Ted told me how when he was being questioned in his private office they suddenly heard the sound of a typewriter—his typewriter in the outer office. And the policeman on guard there became terribly frightened and said that he saw a headless woman, sitting at a typewriter and typing a message. That's how the glass was broken in that door—the policeman running away."

"The policeman was drunk," decided Pomeroy.

"But the message was there," insisted Aileen. "I don't know what it said, but Ted told me it was some kind of weird spirit message. And besides, the policeman said that the spirit he saw there was wearing a smock!"

She looked from Doctor Blitz to Pomeroy.

"When you remember that," she said, "and when you also remember how puzzled Detective Guy Turner was as to how an old janitress got into the office—Ted told me about that, too—doesn't it seem to you there is something queer about that office?"

"I've always said so," declared Doctor Blitz.

"There's some hidden way of getting into that office and getting out of it again," declared Aileen. "And if they gave me a chance to look through it, I could find it."

"I wish they would let me hold a séance there," said Doctor Blitz. "I know I could find out something."

"We haven't begun to get to the bottom of the thing, even then. There was a note found on that woman's body. It was a pleading, threatening note. It seemed to argue that Peggy Lanville was going to become a mother and that she was demanding that someone marry her. They all believe it was Ted. I don't believe it was Ted. I believe——"

A sudden light swept through Aileen's eyes. She turned and pointed her finger at Pomeroy.

"I believe that note was meant for you!" she cried accusingly.

He stood up, confused and annoyed.

"That is not so," he declared. "Why should she take a note addressed to me to your friend's office? That is too ridiculous, young lady."

Aileen shrugged her shoulders.

"Maybe. It is, at least, one of the mysteries, and it was intended for somebody besides Ted—I know it was never meant for him! . . . I'm not through yet. . . . Doctor Blitz, you've heard me say a lot of things here tonight, but now I am going to say a few things directly to you. I don't believe in this spirit business as completely as you do. And I think that your actions have more than once been peculiar."

"My actions?"

"Yes. . . . I think it was very strange, the way Miss Levering came to our house tonight. . . . And I think it was even stranger that you sent her here, without letting anyone know."

"WHAT on earth do you mean? Do you think that I was in love with Peggy Lanville?"

Doctor Blitz looked as if he felt greatly insulted.

"Father told me that you said you would not hesitate at any crime, even murder, to establish the actuality of Spiritualism. It seems far-fetched—but so do some of the things you say and do, Doctor. Don't mind my frankness . . . this is not the time for mere politeness, is it? All your actions, your eagerness to hold that séance in the room where the headless murder had been committed, point to an almost fanatical interest in the subject. I think you ought to explain some matters, too."

Doctor Blitz nodded his head with a saccharine kind of dignity.

"Indeed," he remarked. "And are there any other little matters that puzzle you about this case, my dear?"

"Yes, there are, Doctor. Just what did you mean when we all went down to Ted's office and you said to the detective that there would be another murder committed in the office if they were not careful?"

"I don't remember saying any such thing," said Doctor Blitz blankly.

"I heard you," said Aileen. "That is just what you said."

"Yes, Doctor," said Gilbert Pomeroy, "I remember your saying that to Detective Turner."

"Did I?"

The voice of Doctor Blitz was hushed to a whisper.

"I had forgotten all about it," he declared. "Perhaps I was trying to impress him . . . or no! I remember. When I was talking to my medium, up at Mr. Grey's home, she got a trance message that another murder would be committed there. That was how it was—yes—that was how it was!"

"Very odd," said Pomeroy.

"Very," said Aileen.

"Well—are there any more questions?" asked Doctor Blitz briskly.

"One more," said Aileen. "Do you remember when we came here tonight, Doctor Blitz, that we saw Mr. Pomeroy coming here ahead of us?"

"Yes! That's right. I had forgotten that. Of course we did. You said his figure was vaguely familiar, but you couldn't precisely identify him."

"That's correct. And you do remember, don't you, that someone was following him?"

Pomeroy leaned forward, his eyes widening.

"Somebody following me?" he asked.

"Yes . . . a little, dark man who hid behind a tall flight of steps and watched you come in here."

"Hm!"

Gilbert Pomeroy was obviously worried.

"I can't imagine who it could be," he said.

"Perhaps it had no connection with this case at all," suggested Doctor Blitz. "I said that to Aileen at the time."

"You also said there was no such thing as coincidence," returned Pomeroy, walking to the window. "I wonder if he is still there."

"I don't think you could see him from there," said Aileen.

"You never can tell."

Pomeroy pushed back the lace curtains and pressed his forehead against the glass.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "We are in for it, now!"

"What?" asked Aileen and Doctor Blitz, rushing toward the window.

ALL this time, Margaret Levering had lain quietly on the couch, with her eyes closed.

The three of them stared out of the window down in the narrow canyon of the street. Upon the asphalt the moon glittered whitely; far away they heard the rumble of a passing elevated train, and nearby the roar of a starting taxicab motor.

"There! Up the street!" whispered Pomeroy; so taut were his nerves that he had lowered his voice, under the momentary delusion that his voice could be heard all the way down in the street.

Then they saw, on the opposite sidewalk, what it was that had so excited Pomeroy. Three men were standing in a little group, and one of them, Pomeroy whispered, had until that moment been pointing directly at the window through which they were then looking down.

"If I am not mistaken," said Gilbert Pomeroy, "we made a grave mistake in ever turning those lights on."

"Do you think it can be the police?" asked Doctor Blitz.

"I didn't see any uniform . . . but then, they might be plain-clothes detectives."

"What shall we do?"

Before either of them could reply to Aileen's question, there came an interruption, in the form of a low moan from the figure on the couch.

Margaret Levering was muttering in a pained undertone.

"My God!" said Doctor Blitz, "Margaret is going into a trance again. . . . Maybe we will get something this time!"

"What shall we do?" asked Aileen. "How can we help?"

"Turn out the lights," said Doctor Blitz.

As Aileen crossed the room to turn off the switch, she saw an amazing sight. Gilbert Pomeroy, ignoring the woman on the couch, or the excitement of Doctor Blitz and Aileen regarding her condition of coming trance, had gone to the fireplace, and placing his bundle of letters over the gas-logs had turned on the cock and applied a match. Just as Aileen flashed off the lights, the fire of the burning love-letters spilled a leap of yellow and blue light through the room.

Doctor Blitz's voice sounded cracklingly on the stillness.

"A spirit made you do that thing," he cried. "Those flames will help the dead. The dead have been watching the living. Now perhaps the living will watch the dead. Who can tell?"

On his knees before the fireplace, Gilbert Pomeroy turned around and looked. The light on his face brought out in livid detail the fear that was in his eyes and the tortured twisting of his lips.

"I didn't do it—for that," he said. "I thought the police were coming up here from the street——"

"Burn them! Burn them! Burn them!" boomed Doctor Blitz, his voice sounding like a chant uttered in the exorcism of evil demons. "Tear out the photograph and burn that, too!"

"No!" said Aileen. "He may have killed her. That is evidence. You are letting him burn up the evidence!"

"Burn them! Burn them! Burn them!" hooted Doctor Blitz, who seemed himself under some curious spell. "I am not afraid. The truth is coming—soon. I have never felt like this at a séance before. I can feel that something unusual is going to happen!"

"But the police may be coming!" cried Aileen.

"We must not let them in! This is too near—we are ready to cross the borderland—see—see——"

HE was pointing at Margaret Levering. The woman had arisen. Her face seemed fixed in some cataleptic expression of horror. Her eyes were wide and staring. Her hands were outstretched—and they could not tell if those clutching fingers were out-flexed so, in an imitation of the way in which Peggy Lanville was murdered, or whether they were holding an invisible severed head.

"Don't speak to her! Don't touch her!" said Doctor Blitz. "Quiet! Quiet!"

The medium's lips opened and her voice, hollow and profound, issued forth, saying:

"I am the spirit of one woman—I am the spirit of another woman—I am the spirit of a third woman—Fanny and Peggy and Margaret—Margaret and Fanny and Peggy—three women who will see that justice is done. Follow the three of us now—the three of us crowded into this one body—follow us as we cross the floor—follow us and we shall lead you to where——"

At that moment there came a sharp, tingling peal of a bell.

Someone was at the door!

Who—or what—rang at the door of the murdered Peggy Lanville? What new horror is awaiting Aileen, and her accused sweetheart? This amazing serial nears its astounding climax in the November number of GHOST STORIES, *on the stands September 23d. Don't miss an instalment of "The Phantom of the Fifteenth Floor."*

Pawn of the Unseen

(*Continued from page 12*)

stayed off for a long time, and central gets no answer, but finally she gets the idea that everything ain't all right there—that something funny is happening, so she tells the head operator about it. The head operator tells it to the police, and Headquarters gets in touch with the cop on the beat, who goes to Grimm's home and wakes the butler. The butler don't know nothing about it, but he and the cop goes into the living room—and that's where they found it."

"It?"

"Yes, the body of Martin Grimm," said the detective succintly.

Terry was silent, but his gaze was inquiring, and the detective went on.

"Yes, there was Martin Grimm, already getting cold in death, sitting at the telephone."

Terry started, but caught himself before it was perceptible. "At the telephone?" he inquired.

"YES, at the telephone. Sitting at his table, with the receiver at his ear, and his mouth open, almost as though he was speaking into the phone. He was propped up on his elbow, and that held the body erect. It looked almost like he were just engaged in a conversation, but when they touched him, he collapsed in a heap to the floor, and they picked him up and put him on the couch.

"They examined him carefully, and there wasn't a mark on him. They called the doctor, and he said it must have been heart disease."

"Sitting at the telephone . . . talking . . . " said Terry, and he felt a stirring at the roots of his hair. Grimm had always been strange . . . there was something about him, Terry had always felt, that was not of this earth—an aura of the unearthly, a feeling as though around him were things no ordinary human could see. There was that about Martin Grimm, reflected Terry, that nobody had ever explained: things that would never see the light. Not for nothing was the old man a recluse. Yet something within him whispered that he had better be careful. Lenore was some way involved in this curious case, and he must make no false step. At the telephone!

"Well, then," he said at length, "where do you come into this thing, and why do you think there was foul play?"

The detective dug into a vest pocket and drew out a folded sheet of scarlet paper. "I thought you would ask that. When the butler and the flatfoot examined the room, they found an arrow quivering in the wall near the old man—it looked as though it had been shot in through the open window from the street."

"An arrow?"

"Yes, the kind the kids use, only better made. And this paper was on it." He unfolded the scarlet sheet, pierced through its center, evidently where the head of the arrow had been pushed through. He handed the sheet to the wondering Terry, who smelled a faint aroma of pungent Oriental perfume as he took it, spread it out on the arm of his chair, and read the terrible message to Martin Grimm, now cold in death:

> Traitor! Tonight your soul goes flaming down to hell!
> THE SEVEN.

The message was roughly printed, as though with a brush dipped in purple ink, and the paper was crinkled where the heavy ink was too much for it.

The detective nodded significantly as Terry read this message aloud.

"Now," said Carton, "you can see where I got the idea of foul play. Evidently he saw the arrow come flying in, and started to call up the police, and——"

"Yes, but the telephone," said Terry.

"Why, what's wrong with the telephone?" queried the detective. "It sounds perfectly logical, doesn't it?"

"Well, the funny part of it is this," said Terry slowly. He resolved to mention the matter to the detective, as it was extremely unlikely that it would go unnoticed anyway. Probably the butler would speak of it, if he himself didn't.

"You see," said Terry, "the telephone is the curious part of the whole affair. I cannot for the life of me understand how Martin Grimm could have been sitting at the telephone, talking, or about to talk, when this happened."

"Why not?" inquired Carton.

Terry did not speak for a moment. There was a tense silence, and the detective leaned forward, sensing that something startling was about to develop. Finally, when the silence had become almost unbearable, the detective spoke

again, his voice puzzled, interested.

"Why not?" he asked. "Why shouldn't he be sitting talking on the telephone?"

Terry's mouth felt dry, and he moistened his lips before he spoke; the detective's face was rigid and immobile in its amazement.

"Martin Grimm," said Terry, slowly and deliberately, "was deaf and dumb!"

FOR a space there was a dead silence between the two men, Terry noting the effect of his announcement, and the detective trying to grasp its meaning. Finally the detective spoke, parroting the words as though by some reflex action of his vocal cords utterly disconnected and dissociated with his brain:

"Deaf and dumb!" His tone was monotonous and emotionless, as though his mind were still struggling for the meaning of the simple words. "Deaf and dumb!"

Terry nodded. "The question is," he said, "what was a deaf and dumb——"

The man from Headquarters found speech and interrupted him. "What was a deaf and dumb guy doing at the telephone?"

"You answer that one," said Terry.

"Trying to get a number?" Carton was puzzled.

Terry nodded slowly. "He might have better luck than some of us. I've often wondered how to go about getting a correct number nowadays——"

"Never mind the wisecracks," said the detective. "It ain't so funny. It looks as if there is more to this case than I figured on." He regarded Terry suspiciously. "Are you dead sure that's all you know about it?"

"Absolutely all," said Terry.

"This here now Lenore," the detective regarded him closely: "Do you know where she's living now? Or where I can get hold of her? She might know more about this than we think."

Terry shook his head. "No," he said. "You see, when she moved she said nothing about where she was going. I've met her next door a few times since, when she was visiting there, but that's all."

The detective rose and took up his derby hat, which he had put on the floor next to his chair.

"Well, I guess I'll be going back again next door, and give things the once over."

"Are you sure Martin Grimm was murdered?" asked Terry.

"I don't know," replied Carton, shaking his head in a mystified fashion. "Couldn't find any real signs of it—but something tells me there's a lot under the surface of this here case. There's more ways of doing away with people than by messing up the whole block with them. Anyway, I'm going to look it over pretty careful. Deaf and dumb, eh?"

Shaking his head dubiously, the man from Headquarters took his departure.

TERRY sat quietly in his chair for many minutes, thinking. He could not seem to make head or tail of the matter. There were two things that puzzled him. First, there was the matter of the early morning visit of Lenore next door—for he was certain that it had been Lenore. A pretty little morsel for the detective, he reflected, and was glad he had had presence of mind enough not to say anything about it. Then there was the manner of Grimm's death—talking at the telephone. He had known Grimm for over a year now, and had never known him to utter a syllable—or, as far as he knew, to hear one. What could this business mean? Had Grimm suddenly recovered his hearing and his speech, late at night . . . shocked into speech, so to say, by some news of surprise and violence? Terry shook his head, doubting this.

Or had Grimm, perhaps, always been able to speak and to hear . . . and had he for some reason of his own kept his ability in that direction a secret? This, Terry thought, might be a possibility. There had always been something queer about the old man. An air of mystery—an aura of reserve—something that was not in the ordinary human being. But Terry had always put that down to the fact that he was deaf and dumb, and consequently apt to be somewhat different from other people.

Two or three times a week Terry had played chess with the queer old recluse, who seemed to have absolutely no other acquaintances or friends. Generally, Lenore had been there. He knew, too, that Lenore was often there when he himself wasn't, and that until recently she had lived with Martin Grimm. A queer relationship, Terry thought, that of a vibrant, live young girl, and a living dead man. That's how Martin Grimm had always seemed to him . . . a shade from beyond, somehow clothed in the habiliments of the living, yet in some fashion without seeming to be imbued with the spark of life.

He remembered his first glimpse of old Martin Grimm. Lenore and Terry had passed each other on the street many times, and he had been attracted by her appearance, though she never, to be sure, appeared to pay the slightest attention to him. One day, however, she slipped on a fruit peel in front of her house just as Terry was mounting the steps to his. He was at her side in an instant as she lay there, unable to get up.

HE lifted her in his arms and took her into her own house, the door being opened by the ancient butler, who was shocked almost into incoherence at the sight of his young mistress lying white and still, in the arms of the stranger from next door. Terry brought her up to the living room and placed her gently on the couch. By that time the butler had brought a glass of water, and Terry poured it down her impertinent lips . . . even at that moment Terry noted the impertinent, defiant curl of the upper lip, and the entire absence of color in the face, with the exception of the scarlet mouth, making her look like a mystic creature born in the over-excited, morbid brain of Edgar Allan Poe. Terry started at the remembrance, as he saw her and thought about the scene, for wasn't Lenore the name of one of Poe's spirit women? . . . One of the female creatures, born of white loveliness and pale moonlight, that lived only in the brain of the poor, mad poet?

Lenore had opened her luminous orbs and smiled soberly at him, after drinking the water, and he saw her eyes go from him to another part of the room, behind him. He turned, and there was a silent figure, wrapped in a great bathrobe, sitting in a large overstuffed chair. Only the eyes seemed to be alive. Otherwise the figure was utterly motionless, motionless with the lack of motion of the dead, or of one who had never lived. The face was a pale, opaque masque of the dead, expressionless and lifeless, but the eyes illuminated all. They were deep as twin mountain pools, so intense that they appeared to miss nothing.

The sparse hair was white, and the hands, resting on the arms of the chair, were small and sensitively formed . . . like the hands of a great artist, or a famous surgeon. In front of him was a small table, on which rested a chessboard. At this Terry's interest became more intense, since chess was his passion and his relaxation.

"It is my uncle, Martin Grimm," said the colorful voice of the girl . . . a voice clear and musical, with hidden deeps untouched by the ordinary voice, with another dimension unknown to the sound of ordinary speech.

"This is Mr. Lenihan, uncle," went on the girl, and Terry remembered being mystified at her knowledge of his name, though he had contrived to know hers, Lenore. "I slipped and turned my ankle in front of the house, and Mr. Lenihan was good enough to help me in."

Martin Grimm nodded, the first movement he had made. It was a trifle jerky, as of one who has learned to move. He moved with the precision with which a foreigner speaks English . . . it was something not native to him. His eyes, however, expressed his gratitude, and the girl hastened to explain:

"My uncle is deaf and dumb, Mr. Lenihan, but he thanks you."

Terry turned to her in surprise. "Then how did he know——"

She laughed, a laugh as mysterious as night and as gentle as dawn. "Oh, he reads my lips. He doesn't need his ears—he knows what you are saying almost before you say it."

Terry smiled, glancing at the chessboard, on which the men seemed to be arranged as though old Grimm had been in the midst of a game.

"If it's a problem," said Terry, looking at the old man, "the black cannot possibly win."

Martin Grimm's eyes took on the keenest interest. He shook his head violently in dissent at Terry.

"Look," said Terry, and his hand leaped forward and moved the white castle forward four spaces. The marvelously sensitive hand of Martin Grimm glided toward the chessboard like a snake, and took the castle with his queen.

Terry moved his knight crookedly forward, attacking both the king and the queen.

"Check!"

It took half an hour to decide the game, which was won by the white.

AFTER that Terry was an habitué in the strange household, where none but those who were present at that time ever entered during the life of Martin Grimm. He learned little about the old man, either from the butler or from

Lenore, who was able to tell him only that Martin Grimm had come east from California only a year or two before, and that he was now living on his income. He learned, too, that he had been an artist, and inspected two pictures which hung in the living room; pictures of a school now past, comparable only to the battle pictures of Meissonier, in which thousands of horses and men were portrayed, each one perfect and distinct down to the last detail. It was an artistic school now no longer in repute, if it could have been called art at all in an age when art was considered to be the process of elimination—when an artist was greater more by what he was able to leave out than by what he put in. Lenore explained that Martin Grimm had a kind of photographic eye. He had a marvelous ability to draw, and a strange accuracy about detail that was nothing short of miraculous, but with the present trend in artistic things, this ability was useless to him.

Lenore herself was an artist, inheriting indirectly her uncle's flair for line, but she had subordinated her ability to a present day artistic impulse that made her work very acceptable indeed. Her uncle, upon coming east, had sought her out and asked her to live with him, that he might have someone of his own kin with him in his last days. So she was here, and that was the story as far as Terry could learn it. As for the butler, John Blood, he had come east with Grimm, and while not deaf and dumb, he was quite as uncommunicative as his master. It had seemed sometimes to Terry that once or twice he had caught an intimate glance between the two men, a glance that spoke of something in common, something not known to others; but he had not been sure of this, and dismissed the matter from his mind.

He and Lenore had become very friendly . . . as friendly as the almost uncanny reserve of the girl would permit . . . and on his part, though he would scarcely admit it to himself, this friendship had its basis in something deeper and more permanent. Several times they had gone to dinner or the theater together, and there had been one curious and terrifyingly enchanted moment in the dark hall of the Grimm house, just before Lenore had left it.

He had been playing chess with Martin Grimm, and it was after one when he left the old man in the living room and went downstairs to the hall to let himself out, as the butler was already asleep. As he turned into the dim hall at the end of which lay the street door, a white figure detached itself from the wall. He turned as a soft white hand was laid on his arm, and a warning finger across his lips.

"Lenore!" he whispered, for though he could not see well, he knew who it was. There are people who carry their own auras around with them . . . people who can never by any chance or possibility be mistaken for anybody else; and of such was Lenore, white as the moonlight on the wane, mysterious as a tropic night.

"Sh-h!" her warning finger was on his lips. "Terry!" she whispered, langourous. Her touch sent his senses reeling. In an instant his arms were around

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her, his lips on hers, and his brain swooned away in the closeness of her . . . he felt as though disembodied, as though he were a part of the subtle Oriental perfume that she used always and that she had made a part of her.

FOR how long they stood thus in the dim hallway, her arms around his neck and their lips locked, he could not know . . . it was a moment and it was an eternity . . . it was all of life compressed into one space and one instant . . . time had ceased to be.

A step on the stair brought him back to himself. On the stairway close at hand, someone was going up. The footstep was without reverberation—without any of the overtones customary to the ordinary sounds of human things. It was a footstep, and nothing else . . . as though made by feet without a body. It seemed that a pair of phantom shoes was mounting the stairway. As they stood listening, the soft sound of the steps receded up the stairs. They followed the sound with their eyes, almost believing that they could see the—things, mounting the steps.

Pad . . . pad . . . pad . . . pad . . .

"Who's that? What can it be?" asked Terry in a whisper.

The girl shook her head. "I don't know," she said in low, throaty tones. "I hear it every night . . . it is no one in this house . . . but every night I hear those steps going up or down stairs. I have never been able to discover whose they were—or what they were. They seem to come out of nowhere and to go into nowhere . . . I am used to them by now, but they frightened me dreadfully when I first heard them."

"Does anybody else hear them here?" asked Terry.

"It's a peculiar thing, because although the butler doesn't ever hear them, my uncle does. He says it is the only thing in all the world he can hear. We both believe the place is haunted. I know you might laugh at that, but you've just heard the footsteps yourself."

"The only thing in all the world he can hear!" repeated Terry. "Then if the place is really haunted, the only thing in all the world that Martin Grimm can hear isn't in the world at all."

The girl nodded, her eyes upon his face. He turned to her and forgot the footsteps. "Lenore!" he whispered, and would have embraced her.

She eluded him, and started for the stairs, a white shade under the dim hall light that burned fitfully at the head of the stairs.

"Go, now!" Her voice floated back vaguely to him across the resisting darkness. In a moment he found himself in the street, with the cool night air grateful on his flushed face.

When he saw her the next night she denied all knowledge of what had taken place, and laughed at his protestations. He did not press the matter.

AS he sat here and thought over what had gone before, Terry considered it quite likely that Lenore would have a great deal of light to shed on the matter. In any event, of course, it would be necessary to notify her of the death of her uncle, and he considered that it would be better for him to perform this office than for an officer of the law to do it—better, too, than that she should learn it from the newspapers.

He went to the telephone and called her number. Her throaty voice answered him.

"Yes, this is Lenore. Hello, Terry," she said.

"Hello, Lenore," replied Terry.

"What is it, Terry?" came back her voice.

"It's about your uncle," said Terry. "You probably haven't heard——"

"Yes I have. My uncle died last night." Her voice was steady, and, he thought, a trifle hard. Then she had heard.

"How did you know that?" he asked.

There seemed to him to be a slight hesitation at the other end of the line before her answer, or had he simply imagined it?

"Why, the butler, Blood, called me up early this morning," she replied.

"Oh," said Terry. That would be it, of course. Stupid of him not to have thought of that. Naturally, Lenore would instantly have leaped into the mind of the butler, as being the only kin the old man had here. How simple things were when you knew the explanation.

"I want you to answer me something, Lenore," said Terry.

"I will if I can," she answered over the wire. "What is it?"

He paused for a moment before his question, and then went ahead with it.

"What were you doing at your uncle's house at two o'clock this morning?" he asked.

Without a moment's hesitation the answer came back to him, steady and clear. "I was not at my uncle's house at that time. I haven't been there for three days. Why do you ask that?"

Terry was speechless for a brief space. He knew the girl had been there. He could not be wrong about it. After all, there were some things she could not get away with with him, even though he intended, of course, to keep her secret.

"Now, look here, Lenore, there is no necessity for you to lie about it to me. I know——"

There was a click at the other end of the line, and his words were thrown back at him over the wire, in the manner of speech when there is no ear to receive it. Exasperated, and not a little mystified, he hung up his receiver and stared blankly at the instrument.

Now, why should she deny a fact that he knew to be true? What purpose could there be in such an evasion? If he had been from the police, he could understand it, but as he was Terry Lenihan, probably the only good friend Lenore had on earth now that her uncle was gone, the thing seemed wanton to him.

As he stared at the telephone, it rang again as if in answer to his thoughts. He took down the receiver and put it to his ear. Undoubtedly, he thought, it was Lenore, apologising for her rudeness. Well, he would be firm, and not forgive her too easily.

"Hello, Terry Lenihan speaking," he said into the mouthpiece.

"Mr. Lenihan?" came a masculine voice. "This is Blood, Mr. Grimm's butler. Do you know Miss Lenore's address, or telephone number?"

"Why, haven't you got it, Blood?" asked Terry, a trifle startled. "What do you want it for?"

"Why, I think I ought to notify her of her uncle's death, sir. Don't you think so?"

For the space of five seconds no sound was heard but the drumming of the live current in the telephone wires. So the butler had not notified her of her uncle's death!

"I'm coming over in a few minutes, Blood," replied Terry at length. "I'll give it to you then. Are the police there?"

"Not right now, sir, but I think they're coming back."

"All right, Blood, I'll be right over."

He hung up his receiver with a click, and turned to face his man Marius.

"The gray suit with the dark blue tie, sir?" asked Marius.

"What do you think of it, Marius?" asked Terry.

"It's still in very good shape, sir——" began his man.

"I don't mean the suit. I mean the case . . . I mean old man Grimm," interrupted Terry.

"I'd stay out of it, if I were you, sir," advised the young cleric.

"I know, but——"

"You can very well stay out of it, sir," repeated the valet. "Miss Lenore had nothing to do with it."

"How do you know that?" asked Terry, not at all surprised that Marius seemed to know all about the matter. Marius had a way of hearing everything and seeming to hear nothing.

"She's not that kind, sir. That's all you need to know about a young lady like that."

"I guess you're right, Marius. Make it the gray suit with the dark blue tie."

He dressed swiftly in a moody silence, and was out of the house in ten minutes.

BLOOD was becoming old. Not that age showed on him more than usual, but there was that air about him as of one who has always been the same age, and to be ageless is to be aged, as we mortals measure the human span. His step was still as gliding and as silent as ever, and the entrance of Blood into the room had ever been impossible for the human ear to detect. There are some people who have learned the knack of gliding about like grey ghosts of darkness; the sound of whose voices are a continual surprise, as being incongruous with the disembodiment of the rest of them.

Such was Blood, butler of the late Martin Grimm, and now even more vague in the household where his master lay lifeless and cold. Martin Grimm was in the living room, awaiting a final disposition that had always been distasteful to him, full of horror and subtle fear.

Terry felt all this about the butler, whom he had never been able to fathom. That there had been some undertone of understanding between Martin Grimm and his butler, Blood, whom he had brought with him out of nowhere, Terry had always believed. Now, as Blood

stood there answering his questions in a flat, dead, one-dimensional tone of voice, he was convinced of it.

Blood confirmed all that Carton, the detective from Headquarters, had told Terry. The coroner was already there, as Carton had insisted that this was a case for the coroner, though he was unable to give an opinion as to just what had actually happened.

As they stood there in the hallway, talking, the lower living room door on the right of the hall opened, and the coroner and Carton appeared.

"That's Mr. Lenihan," said Carton, and introduced the coroner, who asked him to come into the living room to answer a few questions. Terry assented, and entered the room where the body of Martin Grimm, covered with a sheet, lay on the couch, looking smaller and more insignificant in death than it had in life. The coroner took off one corner of the sheet, showing Terry the face of the dead man.

"Do you know this man, Mr. Lenihan?" he asked. Terry nodded.

"I knew him quite well," he replied. He examined the face, calm and reposeful. The eyes were closed, and the expression of peace on the face of the old man wiped any grief Terry may have felt for his sudden taking off clear out of his heart. After all, he was better as he was now. Rest and quiet, peace and final oblivion, these were the ultimate aims of life, Terry considered. The ambition and the final achievement of life was the end of it; was death.

TERRY answered substantially the same questions that Carton had put to him, in much the same manner. The coroner, having examined the butler previously, shook his head in doubt, and turned to Carton.

"Where is this niece of the deceased?" he queried.

"I don't know," replied Carton, "but I'm going to find out."

There was the sound of a door opening and closing, and a whispered feminine voice in the hall. Terry stiffened. He knew that voice.

The door to the living room opened silently, and Blood stood in the opening.

"Miss Lenore Grimm is here," he announced. "Do you wish to see her?" His face was quiet and imperturbable, and in response to the coroner's assent he ushered her in.

Lenore stood in the doorway. She was pale, as usual, her scarlet lips a colorful slash across a white background.

"Did you wish to see me?" she asked, her rich voice vibrating, syllable by syllable, in the poignant air.

"I did," replied the coroner, "please come in and sit down."

Terry stood motionless and seemingly unnoticed. Lenore sat upright in one of the old-fashioned chairs near the body, her hands reposeful in her lap and her face a mask of calmness.

"Why did you come here?" queried the coroner.

"My uncle is dead," she said quietly. "Isn't that enough reason?"

The coroner considered for an instant, and then spoke: "How did you know your uncle was dead?"

Lenore did not turn in Terry's direction, and gave no indication of knowledge of his presence other than her answer, which came quick as a flash:

"Mr. Lenihan, here, telephoned me this morning about it." Her voice was expressionless. The coroner turned to Terry.

"Why didn't you tell me this, Mr. Lenihan?" he inquired.

"You didn't ask me," replied Terry with equanimity.

"But you told me you didn't know where Miss Grimm was," broke in Carton, the man from Headquarters.

"I know I did," replied Terry, "but I had mislaid the address. I found it after you left me."

The examination covered much of the same ground that had been gone over before. Lenore re-affirmed the statements of Terry and the butler that the old recluse had been deaf and dumb. She could give no explanation for the fact that he was found dead at the telephone, seemingly both able to speak and hear.

That was about all. There seemed to be no more information to be had from anybody, and the case, outside of the element of the mysterious message that came in with the arrow, and the matter of the deaf and dumb victim talking on the phone, seemed to be just an ordinary one due to heart failure.

It was so recorded, despite the objections of the man from Headquarters, and the coroner issued a certificate to that effect, taking his departure. Carton lingered for a moment in the doorway, before taking his leave.

"I'm going," he said, looking significantly at everybody in the room, "but I may be coming back again. You never know. There is something here that hasn't been explained to me yet." He went.

WITH the slamming of the outer door Terry was up. He again turned down the corner of the sheet and gazed intently at the face of the dead man. It was smooth and unbroken, except that under the jawbone at the left was a small shaving cut, no larger than an eighth of an inch. He turned to Lenore, who sat rigid and motionless in her chair, and seated himself beside her.

"That cut wasn't there when I left your uncle last night . . . and he had shaved a few minutes before."

"What of it?" she asked. "Does it matter?"

"Certainly it matters, Lenore. There are poisons that are so strong that even a slight cut——"

"Oh, nonsense. You've been reading detective mysteries again. What does it matter what happened," Lenore broke in. "He is gone. That is enough. Let us not pursue the matter further."

He looked at her in silence. Her whole attitude in this matter had been queer; her denial of last night's visit, the peculiar circumstances of her knowledge of her uncle's death, though it appeared to be established that neither Blood nor Terry had informed her . . . it looked rather peculiar. She broke in on him.

"Don't be so shocked at death. It's the commonest thing in life . . . it is a commonplace. There can be no life without death. Why be so nonplussed

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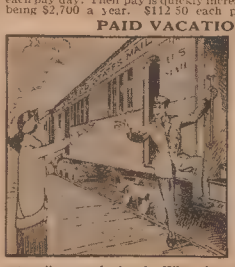

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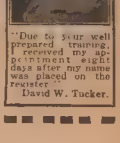

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when it appears? . . . It is the one thing that is absolutely sure to appear. Never mind my connection with this thing. Has the undertaker been notified?"

Terry glanced fearfully at the dead body of Martin Grimm.

"Sh-h-h!" He looked around again. "You know how afraid he was of them."

"I know, but he cannot hear . . . and his eyes are closed, so there is no danger——" She broke off with a startled scream, and Terry rose and followed her gaze, transfixed.

Martin Grimm's eyes were no longer closed. They were open.

There was a brief and horrified silence. The same thought occurred to both of them. In an instant Terry had recovered the use of his limbs and was at the side of the dead man, feeling for his heart. The body was already cold, and there would never again be a flutter of that piece of human clay called the heart of Martin Grimm. Yet the eyes suddenly had opened wide!

Terry gave a short, apologetic laugh. "I forgot. That happens sometimes—the eyes have to be weighted down with something." He covered the body again with the sheet, and they both breathed freely once more.

"I was startled because it seemed so uncanny—as though at the very mention of the word undertaker he was able to take on life again. I never saw a man so afraid of anything—and that was the only thing in the world that could put fear into your uncle's heart."

"Yes, I know," said Lenore. "I once asked him just what difference it would make to him, once he was dead . . . and how he expected his body to be disposed of without the services of an undertaker. He wrote me an answer on that slate of his that he used for communication—where is it, he used to have it around here?—Oh, here it is," she located it on the library table and went to pick it up. "He wrote that dead or alive, he would never —"

She broke off with a scream that reverberated through the house, holding the slate in her hand as though she were transfixed. Terry jumped to her side.

"My God!" she exclaimed. "Look at this!"

Terry followed her gaze, and there on the slate, in Martin Grimm's scrawling handwriting, was the message:

> Dead or alive, I will never permit any undertaker to come near my body.
>
> MARTIN GRIMM.

Terry's nerves were shaken, but he kept a strong hold on himself for the sake of Lenore.

"There, there." He patted Lenore's shoulder. "It's the same message he wrote you—it was never erased."

"I know, dear——" Terry thrilled at the sound of the endearment. "I know, but——"

There was a knock on the door. It swung open silently, and Blood stood there.

"The undertaker is here." He made the announcement, gazing fixedly at the white sheet under which could be seen the outline of the body of Martin Grimm.

"All right, Blood, Miss Lenore and I will see him."

BLOOD withdrew, and Lenore and Terry followed him through the great ebony door, which Terry noted as he went out. It was an old-fashioned, hand carved affair, massive and solid, and it closed with a massive lock that locked on the inside. There was no new fangled snap lock on this door, and Terry remembered commenting how like Martin Grimm himself this great door appeared. All this passed through his head in the flicker of a lash, as he gently closed the door behind him . . . the door of the room in which lay the body of the strange old chess player, Martin Grimm.

He turned to face the undertaker and his assistant.

"This way," he said, and stood aside for the undertaker to enter the room. The undertaker bowed and put his hand on the door. He pushed. There was no result. The door remained closed. A cold fear gripping at his heart, a horror of he knew not what—and Terry put his hand on knob and tried the door.

The door was closed . . . locked from the inside!

Who—or what—had locked that heavy ebony door? How could Martin Grimm, lying dead upon the couch, have done it? Yet he had to keep out the undertaker he had hated while he lived! The second instalment of this enthralling serial will appear in November GHOST STORIES. *Don't miss "Pawn of the Unseen" next month. There will be a thrill on every page.*

The Flaming Curse of Belden Hall

(*Continued from page* 16)

on the ground that its haunted?"

"No," he replied indifferently. "What?"

"That there's mischief brewing in that particular spot of a highly human origin," I said. "Criminals, you know, particularly like the protection of a house supposed to be haunted."

"I see you are completely unafraid," he answered, and I thought there was just a little note of admiration in his voice. "But criminals scarcely infest one spot for the period of—of a life-time."

"Parke Belden's life-time?" I said.

He admitted this.

"I have surely had no demonstration of anything frightful as yet," I said. "Lay the fire, and I'll touch it off if you're afraid. And—I suppose there are no baths—find me a tub to take up to my room."

Mark Bell obeyed rather meekly. The forces which held him in control, whether human or otherwise, were, he discovered, inoperative so far as I was concerned.

WE had some difficulty in forcing the door of the bed-chamber, and it required some time to lay the kindling and logs, remove the dust of a life-time, and spread a multitude of blankets upon the springs of a bed which occupied a space directly opposite the fire-place. There was more than enough fresh air, for the glass was all out of the windows; broken no doubt by vandals who were denied entrance by the stout iron bars of the gratings, deeply rusted into their latches.

Tango, apparently unafraid, climbed about on the bed, chattered through the gratings at whatever night-creatures might be without, and at last swung himself up to the top of the great mahogany secretary in which no doubt the plans of Belden Hall were locked. Parke Belden had given me the key. I would examine those plans tonight.

As soon as Mark Bell, the care-taker, was gone I touched a match to the kindling upon the hearth and, when a gentle warmth suffused the room, stripped and got into the improvised bath. After a brisk rub-down, the thought of the supernatural simply did not exist. I got into a dressing gown, lit more lights and unlocked the desk. Sure enough the original plans of Belden Hall were there but they were practically worthless for my purposes. What interested me far more was an old newspaper, a sheet called *Suppressed*, which purported to publish the scandals of the aristocracy of a by-gone age. As I was beginning to drowse, this promised me possible wakefulness for a few minutes more.

But first I glanced about the great room, replaced some candles which were guttering, and double-bolted the only entrance door. I recalled numerous jewel robberies at country houses in that vicinity recently, and this strengthened my belief that these criminals were in hiding somewhere in Belden Hall and had intimidated the ancient care-taker. Surely only such a hypothesis could account for such a tale of mystery as he had attempted to purvey. Well—no one could molest me now protected as I was by those ironed windows and that double bolted door!

At the desk again I picked up *Suppressed*. Its yellowed pages crackled in my fingers. Almost the first words that my glance fell upon were, "Belden—A curse." At sight of this heading, and after recalling the care-taker's mention of something of the sort, I could not fail to read the paragraph on the printed page about the old family. It ran thus:

> When Judge Belden sentenced the carpenter, Theophelus All, to death upon the gallows, the man met death with daring; but, as the noose fell about his throat, he left a curse upon

the house of the Judge. This curse, it is now supposed, accounts in some strange way for the death of the Judge's beautiful young wife and his subsequent flight to Europe with his little son. The words of the curse were as follows:

"When fire is kindled in Belden Hall
I come! I come! Theophelus All."

I suddenly felt a chill stealing over me in spite of the warmth of the room. The mark on Parke Belden's cheek had certainly looked like a noose, and it was a singe—as though made by a branding iron. A hangman's noose!

Eagerly I read on in the guttering candle-light.

The Judge laughed at the words of the curse. He was not living in Belden Hall at the time, but in his town house. He said he was not a superstitious man. He went away on a business trip and failed to warn his fair young wife. She, all ignorant of the fate impending, opened up her country home and was the first to sleep in the great south bedchamber, with her little son, Parke, nearby in a crib.

Arriving home at dawn her husband, the Judge, was the first to come to her room. The servants heard him scream in fright. He had found his young wife—dead. The boy was unharmed, but on his cheek was a mark. When the servants arrived they found the Judge had tied a white silk scarf about the boy's face. This he would never permit to be removed by any but himself, and to this day (almost a year has passed) it is not known exactly what that white scarf concealed.

Nor was the mother's murderer apprehended. At the coroner's inquest, after the most exhaustive examination, it was decided that she died of fright. Absolutely no other cause could be discovered. The father and child have gone to Europe to live in utter retirement, it is understood. And it is believed now by those best informed that the thing that killed the mother by fright left its mark upon the tender face of the little boy.

I found myself puffing wildly at the cigarette I was smoking at the moment. I felt a strange twitching at the roots of my hair, a cold chill about my heart. I, who was without fear, was beginning to experience the sensations of fear. For had not I, even though warned by the old care-taker, kindled a fire in Belden Hall?

WAS it possible that crafty old Parke Belden, with the purpose of testing the validity of the ancient curse at the present time, had consigned me to this room? Had he not insisted that, whatever transpired, I must have a fire on the hearth? I remembered now the particular emphasis he had placed upon the fire, even in the very moment before he had collapsed and revealed to me, all unintentionally, the hideous mark upon his cheek. Should not the sight of that mark have been a warning to me that by following Belden's instructions I was dallying with something sinister, hideous, mysterious?

But, as I glanced about the great south room, the aspect of the place was peace personified. The fire blazed merrily, casting rosy shadows. Tango drowsed on his perch betraying not the slightest trace of terror. Gradually the compelling call of sleep came over me.

I lay in bed watching the flames. Strange that they did not die down as the wood burned. They seemed brighter, wilder, every moment.

"When fire is kindled in Belden Hall——!"

In a sudden fit of terror I looked about for Tango. He was not to be found. Had the little creature fled, again warned by a reversal of nature? I got up and rushed wildly to the door. I strained at the bolts, but the rust on them hindered their operation. I could not open the door!

For a few dreadful moments I paced up and down the chamber. Then normality came to me again and drowsy stupor. I sat down on the edge of the bed to wait for dawn. But soon I had rolled in between the blankets and was asleep.

AT what unearthly hour I do not know, I was awakened by a sigh. It was a hollow, sepulchral sigh that followed me through my dream and resolved itself into a groan upon waking. I sat bolt-upright in the bed—put my feet to the floor, ready to flee.

The fire still blazed upon the hearth opposite. But what was that which crouched before the flames? In Heaven's name—what?

It was a bent cloaked figure, its back toward me, from which the groans issued. Even as my heart fairly ceased to beat I recognized the cloak—the long dark cape which the care-taker habitually wore. How absurd to have been frightened, or even surprised, at the midnight appearance of Mark with a bundle of wood for my fire! He turned and half looked at me. It was Mark, no doubt of that.

"Why Mark Bell!" I exclaimed. "What's the matter?"

"Help! Help!" came the hollow cry. "Help me up. I've strained my back. The wood is heavy. Help me up! Quick! Help!"

"Of course, Mark!" I said in ready sympathy, leaping from the bed and running to him. Then I remembered suddenly that I had never unlocked the door!

But I was trying to lift him up. My hands were already grasping the bent shoulders, encircling the bent back. It was as though my hands were sinking into flesh below that cape—flesh that I felt, and yet which melted strangely under my touch. I could feel my fingers falling between ribs, and then—horror of horrors—I grasped a spinal column!

My blood went cold. I turned deathly sick, but I could not let go. In that terrible moment I felt the backbone turning in my grasp like a rusty hinge. The Thing was looking at me!

THE sight of that death's head maddened me to action. But even as I tore myself loose from its uncanny magnetism, the creature grasped a red-hot poker which lay in the flames and pressed it upon my cheek. It had been heating the iron there for this horrid deed Heaven knows how long.

In my mad struggle with the Thing, I felt both the hellish heat of that blazing poker with which the curse had been marked on my face, and the indescribable cold of my contestant. I was wrestling with a skeleton—and there was a murderous strength in those hideous bony hands. In just a moment, however, I realized that I had a sudden advantage, and using it, forced the poker from those clinging claws. The iron with its red-hot end flew through the air and fell upon the bed. In the same moment I pushed the creature from me and into the roaring flames of the fire place. There was a sudden rush of cold like an icy wave or a draught of Arctic air, a hissing upon the hearth, and the room was in darkness. The kindled fire was out.

But the darkness was not complete. As I groped for a candle I heard a whimper from Tango. Evidently he had crawled into the bed, and the little beast was in terrible pain. The blazing poker upon the bed had traced a singed brand upon the little creature's back! My pet ran for the nearest window, insinuating himself between the bars—and was gone.

At last I struck a light. The charred embers lay upon the hearth as though my fire had died a slow death. The stone-cold poker was in its accustomed place, the room bore no evidence of a struggle or a branding iron. My heart began to beat more regularly. Was it all a dream—a figment of the imagination? But look! A hole had burned itself into the blanket where the poker had fallen! Or was it but the mark of the cigarette which I had been smoking when I had fallen asleep?

At all events Tango was gone. And Tango's evidence would prove or disprove. To this day I have searched for him in vain.

Of course, there is this strange mark upon my cheek—but that too might be from my cigarette. Maybe I only dreamed about the Flaming Curse of Belden Hall.

I never finished the remodelling of the old place. Somehow, practical man that I am, I could not sleep there again.

Read:
THE MAN WITH THE RADIO EARS
By Mark Mellen
A Feature Among the Uncanny, Spooky, Creepy Tales in
November GHOST STORIES

Was Roger Crane MAN or SPOOK?

What did you think of the strange character that appeared in Al Clifton's story in July* GHOST STORIES? *Here are the opinion of some who read the story:

To the Editor of GHOST STORIES:

The story "The Coming of Roger Crane," states that Roger Crane's father hated Roger's mother very much, and that they were always fighting.

I believe that his father decided to kill his wife, and made up his mind to do it in such a way that he never would be found out.

He fastened a rough faced weight to an iron rod, and the other end he formed into a loop, which was securely fastened to an iron pin with both ends secured to large stones under the floor.

A section of the floor was placed on hinges to form a trap door over the weight.

The contrivance was so arranged that when a person approached the fireplace and trod on a certain board, a spring was released, causing the trap door to fly open. There was a strong spring under the weighted rod, which caused it to fly up in a semi-circle, striking the person on the side of the head, killing him and disfiguring the face.

After striking the victim, it would go a little way further and strike a spring stronger than the one that started it. Then the rod would rebound into the floor again, automatically closing the trap door, and resetting all catches ready for the next victim.

The elder Crane's wife may have met her death this way; the story does not say. She may never have chanced to step on the fatal board in the floor.

After his wife's death I think that Roger's father lost partial control of his mind, and never told Roger of the trap.

One evening Roger trod on the spring and was killed.

As soon as his spirit left his body, I believe that it became his duty to haunt the house and warn away others. I really believe Roger Crane's spirit materialized and came to warn the young couple, Tom and Dorothy, in veiled language of the danger.

The night of the catastrophe, Bert got chilly and started over to stir up the fire. He trod on the hidden spring, and never reached the fireplace. Bert's body lay over the spring so that no one else trod on it.

I believe that Bert was able to draw such a fine likeness of Roger Crane because he had an artist's trained imagination, and had been supplied with details from Tom's vivid word picture.

PAUL HENDRICKSON,

Lancaster, O.

To the Editor of GHOST STORIES:

I do not think that the story, "The Coming of Roger Crane," can be either solved or believed by those who do not understand the spirit world. But those of us who do know, who see and believe, who have pierced the veil, find it very easy to understand such a story, far fetched as it may seem to some others.

There are wicked, earthbound spirits, and such a spirit was Roger Crane. There was an evil fascination in his face. He had never repented of his sins and gained Paradise. No, he was hanging around the place where he was killed, waiting in all the strength of his wicked will to revenge himself on the human race by slaying as he was slain.

I think he may have been killed by his evil, quarrelsome father seventeen years before the story opened. Then his wicked soul was sent out of his body to roam the world. He was sad, distracted, when he was talking to Tom and Dorothy, because he realized their youthful goodness and he knew that the good can not be harmed by the evil spirits that rove this earth.

But when Bert Cowley came in he was still near by. And when he saw Bert Cowley he recognized a fellow sinner. Bert Cowley was leading an evil life. He was having a secret love affair with an ignorant little girl who could not tell right from wrong. Bert Cowley would have to pay for his wickedness sometime, and Roger Crane's ghost undoubtedly said "Why not now?"

After Tom and Dorothy retired, the ghost talked to Cowley. Cowley made no outcry. He was not frightened. The evil ones do not frighten each other.

And finally, after Bert had made a sketch of his hideous visitor, Crane slew him with exactly the same blow with which he had been killed years before. Who but a spirit could copy a death blow exactly?

BOB THOMAS,

Raleigh, N. C.

* * * *

To the Editor of GHOST STORIES:

I don't believe the story of Roger Crane can be solved entirely by spiritualism, or by natural means either. I think that Roger Crane himself was an hallucination—brought out by the evil influences of that room of death. There is no doubt in my mind that a room can cast a dread spell—and that happiness is found in some four walls that would be completely destroyed if moved even next door, perhaps.

Roger Crane, I believe, had been killed in that very room by his father, seventeen years before. They probably quarrelled about the mother's death. I think that there was a secret hidden closet in that room, and I believe that even as Crane—or the spirit or mental image of Crane—was talking to Dorothy, the slayer of Bert Cowley was standing in that closet, just where the slayer of Crane had stood so many years before.

I believe that as the slayer listened, he, like Tom and Dorothy, was filled with the mental impression of that old murder. When Bert came, he felt the image of those long dead forms pressing upon him so closely that he was able to draw the picture of Roger Crane himself before he died. Perhaps he too entertained that strange visitor. Who can say whether it was a being from another world, or merely a strong mental image—so strong as to cause self-hypnotism?

Then when Bert was finally alone, sketching and thinking, perhaps, of the pretty little Italian model with whom he was having a secret love affair—then the slayer stepped out from the closet. And, having received his strong mental impression of the former murder, he slew Bert Cowley in exactly the same way that Roger Crane had been slain years before—with a horrible blow on the head and face.

Who was the slayer? Why, the father of the Italian girl, who had learned of Bert's intention to visit Tom and Dorothy and had followed him down.

MARGIE GILBERT,

New York, N. Y.

* * * *

To the Editor of GHOST STORIES:

I wish to give my solution of "The Coming of Roger Crane," for I believe such a story is possible. The devil killed Bert Cowley, because he is the death spirit who deceived the world by such tricks as told in this story, first by having one of his angels take the place of the departed Roger Crane. Then this angel or evil spirit returns or materializes at the proper time, not to scare anyone, but make them believe the dead are not really dead, but live ever more in the spirit which is the soul.

The first lie ever told, the devil told it. "Thou shall not surely die." God said, "Thou shalt surely die."

So the devil tried to prove to the people that Roger Crane still lived by sending one of the fallen angels to act and speak as Roger Crane. Bert Cowley did not know the devil could do these things, or he would have known better than to dispute it openly while the spirit was so near, for they get angry and can make a man go mad.

No, I do not believe Roger Crane could return after seventeen years of death, and strike down a man, but I do believe the unclean evil spirits, which could materialize into the form of Roger Crane, could do so.

FLOYD HALLIN,

Dover, Ohio.

In Terror of Laughing Clay

(*Continued from page 41*)

waited up to lock up the house, and I thought he and the chauffeur were having some fun in the kitchen—in there, so I paid no attention. But a couple of nights later at dinner I said to my wife when the butler was out of the room, 'Did you notice anything about Rollins?' 'I was wondering if you noticed it,' she said. 'He's acting so oddly. Looking over his shoulder out into the hall.' 'Scared,' I said, 'that damn Swedish girl has got his nerve.'

"But I didn't expect he'd ask for his wages next day. 'What's the trouble, Rollins?' I asked. 'I'm a pretty decent master, Shadow, I treat my servants fair and square. 'Anything that can be remedied? I don't want to lose you, Rollins,' I told him.

"I COULDN'T get anything out of him. Mum as the grave, but he did loosen up to Madame before he left. 'Tell the master to look out for that chest in the hall. He don't believe in ghosts, I know, but there's something dead wrong with the chest,' he said to her. My wife asked him to come out with it, but he seemed scared to say more. I got another fellow at once, Englishman—looked a hearty, well-fed, sober-minded man; been through the war and everything. Of course I never piped a word to him about the chest. I had examined the thing again and couldn't find anything out of the ordinary about it."

Ralston stopped short. He shot a strange look at the door.

"Hear anything, Shadow?"

I listened quietly.

"No!"

"Damn funny!" said Ralston with a frown. "Sounded like—like a stone being pulled out of mud—sort of a plop, you know. Well, about Bell, that was his name. He came into the drawing room about eleven to ask if we wanted anything more for the night, and then went out to the hall. Suddenly I heard a commotion, a kind of scuffling, and then a thud. I dashed out to the hall and there lay Bell on his back in a dead faint, or it looked mighty like that to me; but when I bent over him he gave a groan, sprang to his feet, nearly knocking me off my pins, and squared his fists. 'Here, here,' I said sharply. 'None of that. Come to, you've been drinking, my man.'

"He dropped his arms and stared at me, and then began to shudder all over. 'Are you drunk?' I asked again, though he had acted quite normally in the drawing room. 'So help me God, I haven't had a drop in this house, sir.' 'Then what the devil is the matter with you?' I inquired. 'It's this way,' he said, fidgetting about and edging away, 'I was coming along and I barged into the chest here, and all at once the lid goes up and a hand grabs me by the leg and tries to pull me into the chest. So I puts up a fight, and then something wet and 'orrid like a slab of mud gets me right in the face, and I goes down gasping for breath.'

"I stared at him, then I smelt his breath. Not a sign of liquor. 'It's God's own truth, sir, it came out of this 'ere chest.' 'Nonsense, Bell,' I said to him, 'you don't expect me to believe that,' and I lifted up the chest lid."

Ralston stopped and blinked.

"Yes," I prompted him. "Empty, I suppose."

"Ye-es." He paused and added, in a carefully lowered voice: "Where in hell it came from, I can't imagine, but there was a muddy mark on the lid—like, well all I can describe it as—it was like the imprint of the palm of a hand and a great thumb — exaggerated — fully a foot across. I slammed down the lid quick. 'Here, my man,' I said to Bell, 'you get to bed, and not a word to any of the other servants, see? I'll make it worth your while.' He promised and went off looking sick. When he went I lifted the lid again. The mark was gone without a trace. I shut the lid down and then I heard the laugh, mocking me, snickering at my having bitten. How Bell's hallucination had been communicated to me, I don't know. All I knew was I was being played with by some clever tricksters."

"Was there any smear of mud on Bell's face?"

"None. Oh, I looked. I took no chances. I told my wife Bell had fallen over the chest."

"You said your wife was suffering from nerves?"

"Yes, jumping at her own shadow. The final stroke which broke her courage was delivered two days ago. Seems about five o'clock in the afternoon she went out to the hall to switch on the lights. By this time we had only two servants left to us. Bell had gone and the two housemaids. All we had was the chauffeur and our cook, his wife. So my wife had all sorts of odd jobs to do. She noticed that the lid of the chest was up, and thought the cook had been doing some volunteer cleaning and neglected to shut down the chest. So she went to put down the lid. When she saw what was in it she fainted clean away. No one heard her and she has no idea how long she lay, but when she came to, she almost passed out with fright again, and it took all her strength to get as far as the kitchen. I heard the story when I came home."

"Yes. What did she see, or suppose we say—what did she think she saw?"

"THE chest was full, something in it that occupied every inch of it and swelled up over the edge, a soft messy substance that kept rising. And in the midst of it two horrible eyes that glared at her; and then a great shapeless, shadowy hand and arm began to rear out of the mass. It was then she keeled over. I tried to talk her out of her imagination, but she stuck to her story, and the long and short of it was that she insisted on clearing out that night. Now what the devil do you make of it all? Collective hallucination, eh?"

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I could have given Ralston an explanation of sorts there and then, but I knew it would be useless. The man would have to be convinced by some other method.

"I'd like to look into the matter myself," I said. "Suppose I sit up and keep watch tonight, Ralston. I think I noticed a billiard table in a room as we came in. We'll play a game or two, and then you can go off to bed while I hold the fort. I'd just as soon be alone."

"Well, it's your party, I guess. All right, we'll go to my den, Shadow."

We played several games and then Ralston left me to my own devices. I extinguished the lights in the hall, all but one dimmed light just over the beginning of the staircase, moved an easy chair to the doorway of the den, and sat down where I could keep my eye on the chest. I saw that my flashlight was in order, and that I had a cartridge up in the automatic chamber.

I lit a pipe and sat, half dozing. It was about one-thirty by a tall grandfather's clock when I received my first signal of warning, that prompting of an inward voice which says, "Be wary! Be ready!" There was a faint sound like the insistent trickling of water, and almost before I could fully realize the sight, the lid of the chest rose swiftly, hung open for an instant, then closed again noiselessly. Whatever had been within was now at large in the silence of the night.

THE trickling sound had ceased. I could hear nothing but the ticking of the clock and my own breathing. I was aware, however, of a new odor in my nostrils, that of earth, dampened earth or clay; and the skin of cheeks and brow cooled as though a mist-laden breeze was wafted toward them. I sat staring, concentrated, alert. It seemed to me that a shadow upon the wood panels was expanding into a monstrous swollen shape, roughly that of a man, or rather a huge gorilla. I kept my attention fixed upon this, for there is more lurking in a shadow than the ordinary man suspects, and well it is for the peace of mind that this is so. It is too often the concealing vehicle of an aspect of horror. But before I could form any definite opinion this shadow disengaged itself from the wall. In a flash it had passed me and with grotesque but formidable rapidity was upon the wall of the staircase. It vanished. I sprang from my chair and followed.

I fumbled for the switch by the door. But quick as I was the thing that went before was quicker. I heard Ralston shout my name, and then his voice thinned to a shrill squeak like that of a hunted rabbit.

I reached the landing in a leap, and guided by the choking sound coming from one of the several open doors darted forward. At that instant there fell on my ears a voice which, with a sensation of utter bewilderment, I recognized. It was the voice of Professor Carver saying in low but perfectly audible tones:

"Which of us is right now, Ralston?"

Some heavy object landed at my feet as though flung by a gigantic hand. I was hurled against the jamb of the door by the rushing contact of an unwieldy mass. I felt it but it was wholly invisible. For an instant I fumbled for the switch, gasping for breath; then the light glowed in the bulbs. The room was empty but for Ralston. As I bent over him, thinking him dead, he groaned, then stumbled up to his feet, clawing at his throat.

"MY God—that you, Shadow? Did you stop him? See here, this is murder, murder—no less. Caught me by the throat and slung me to the floor."

"Do you mean Carver?" I asked gravely.

"Yes, couldn't see him, but I felt him—heard him. Did you hear him?"

"Yes. But you're mistaken in thinking Carver was here in person. I'm going to tell you something, believe it or not as you will. I'm afraid Carver, in order to convince you of the truth of something you denied, has projected himself into the shell of some vile thing he has materialized. Please answer me one question. At any time did you have an argument with Carver on his pet subject?"

"The last time Carver was here," said Ralston reluctantly. "Had to invite him occasionally on account of the relationship. The fellow had the blatant rudeness to try and thrust his opinions down my throat at my own dinner table. I got pretty hot under the collar—and well—if it hadn't been for my wife's presence—he had never quite gotten over her taking me instead of him—I swear to God I'd have smashed his smirking face in. As it was he wouldn't stay overnight as had been arranged. He went off livid with fury."

"Then if Carver is your enemy, Ralston, there's no time to lose. You're in danger so hideous that it will scarcely bear contemplation. We're dealing with an elemental, a destroying force so terrible under the influence of a revengeful man, that there is no safety for either of us now until it is cast back into the darkness from which it was summoned. We must see Carver at once and bring him to his senses. Can we get a car at this hour?"

"I have a car in the garage still," answered Ralston, keeping his eyes on my face like a frightened child. "I can't believe it—I can't drive, Shadow, I'm all shot to pieces."

"I'll drive," I told him. "We'll start now. Every minute is precious."

Carver has an old house a mile this side of Darien and well off the main road. When we drove up there was a light in the window of a lower room, though the shade was down. I knocked loudly at the door without getting any response.

"That's odd," said Ralston into my ear. "He used to have a Chink servant. Carver must hear us. There's a light in that room."

We went round to the back door. I tried the handle softly and was surprised to find the door was unlocked. We passed through the kitchen into a dark little hall. I called Carver's name several times. At the last summons, there sounded behind us a mocking chuckle, and I had just time to shout a warning to Ralston when the thing was upon us, returned to the house of its birth.

An enormous and palpable but invisible something filled the narrow passageway. I had the sensation of being overwhelmed by a mass of mud which flowed on and over me, leaving me gasping. Behind me I heard Ralston splutter, and then, just as I thought I had reached the limit of my endurance a door against which my back was pressed opened to the strain and I toppled inside. I was in the room in which burned the light. I sprang to my feet, drew my automatic and looked sharply about me. Carver was not to be seen. Ralston stumbled in gasping, and caught my arm.

"My God! It's the hellish thing of the chest!" I exclaimed.

We both stood staring at the extraordinary object on the table.

Upon a wooden table was a grotesque little mannikin of yellow clay, into the head of which were stuck two bits of looking glass eyes. Over its head was a funnel in which was a piece of sponge, apparently kept moist by the fluid which trickled to it through a pipe arrangement. Once in a while a drop would fall on the figure.

"The miniature—the model of the thing he materialized into the abominable and hellish enlargement we encountered," I said.

As he made no reply, I turned my head, He was staring out into the hall. I laid my hand gently on his arm, and as I did so, he let out an appalling shriek:

"It's coming again!"

I turned my gaze sharply to the door. Against the darkness of the hall were two monstrous eyes, phosphorescent with a strangely dead gleam. I had a momentary glimpse of a huge form, shapeless but repulsively reminiscent of the hideous image on the table, and quick as a flash I levelled my automatic not at the menacing shape invading the room, but at its material representation on the table. With my shot, the image spattered to its original clay.

But the horrors of the night were not yet exhausted. As the shot rang through the room, from behind a closed door nearby came an inhuman screech. The door was slowly swinging open.

Exposed to our fascinated gaze was an object so ghastly that I was not surprised to feel my skin creeping with horror.

Within the closet hung a dangling thing, a rope about its neck: the corpse of Carver. His toes swayed a few inches above an overturned stool. It was plain to see to what disastrous end the intensity of evil concentration had led. He had taken his own life.

I heard Ralston whisper.

"Dead—while his spirit came and went in that abominable shape!"

I set my teeth grimly and went forward. The body was stone cold. Carver had been dead for days.

I turned sharply. Ralston, his hands before his face to shut out the hideous spectacle, was stumbling like a blind man to the door. I dragged him out of that unholy house, helped him into the car and turned its bonnet toward New York and sanity.

Two days later I received a tacit admission that Ralston had experienced a change of conviction. Enclosed in an envelope was his check for $10,000.

TRUE GHOST EXPERIENCES

Have you ever seen a ghost? Have you ever had a message from the dead?

Nearly every person in the world has had some experience which could be classed as psychic. Not everyone would recognize a ghost, or would understand a message or warning that purports to come from another world—but most people have had at least one thing happen to them which could not be explained logically.

This department is for the readers of GHOST STORIES Magazine who believe they have had some contact with the spirit world, and they are urged to send in accounts of such experiences. As many as possible of the letters will be published; and if any of the letters call for an explanation, perhaps some of our readers will be glad to write that also to this department. Some of these letters are printed below—and readers are urged to send in their answers. It must be made clear that we will not consider dreams.

GHOST STORIES wants the account of your experience. Send letters to True Ghost Experiences Editor, GHOST STORIES Magazine, 1926 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

The Man Who Knew Death — She Heard the Reaper Coming

OFTEN during my life I have had reason to wonder if it was not possible for those who have gone into the "great beyond" to maintain and demonstrate, to those of this world, the interest they had in the people and things from which death separated them.

All doubts were removed, so far as I am concerned, several years ago. I will try and relate the incident that convinced me.

Until I reached the age of fifteen, the relations that existed between mother and me were more like those which exist between two playmates than between mother and son. Shortly after my fifteenth birthday, mother died suddenly while I was absent, and I never learned of it until several months later.

In 1913 I was stabbed in the left breast, and after a thorough examination by Doctor O. M. Kramer, the prison physician, I was pronounced dead.

Five minutes later, while he was discussing the case over the phone with Warden P. E. Thomas, one of the inmate nurses (a man who had served many years under the silent system, and could read a conversation as far as he could see the movements of the lips) hurried into the doctor's office and reported that he had paused to look at me, after procuring some instruments from the room in which I was awaiting the coroner's arrival, and saw my lips form the word "mother." The Warden hastily appealed to Doctors Hamilton and Rieble (both were widely known surgeons, connected with two local hospitals) and they arrived at the hospital eight minutes later.

They discovered that the small sac at the end of the heart had been severed, and that the heart action had been stopped by a blood clot which had formed about the heart because it could not escape through the small wound. They operated to relieve it and I eventually recovered.

Now, if I was dead during the interval between Doctor Kramer's examination and the nurse's discovery, where was my soul? Doctor Kramer declares that it was not in my body.

My last conscious recollection, on that memorable day, was a feeling of weakness as I ascended the hospital steps. I attempted to sit down, and everything grew dark; not the deep heavy darkness of oblivion, but a sort of twilight darkness. I can't say how long it lasted, but it seemed to part, gradually, like a purple velvet curtain controlled by some invisible agency, and I saw my mother, just as plainly as I ever saw her. She was looking at something which lay between us with a sort of hopeful, eager breathlessness.

There was none of the weird lights and filmy draperies usually ascribed to ghosts or spirits. Everything seemed perfectly natural. I wasn't even surprised, just intensely glad to see her again, and though she appeared very distinct, I seemed to know that she was quite a distance from me, and the object that she was looking at and which lay between us was myself on an operating table.

SHE finally looked at me as though she knew I was there, and an expression of happiness, that I don't believe it is possible to reproduce in this world, appeared on her face. Then, without the slightest sign or consciousness of actual motion, we seemed to draw near. I was never so happy in my life, and in my eagerness to clasp her to me, I exclaimed "Mother!" Then, our advance ceased; a look of keenest disappointment succeeded her happy smile, and I heard her hastily utter four words; and with a sad smile she seemed to grow indistinct until she was swallowed up by the surrounding darkness which grew darker and darker until my sensations ceased to register.

Since my recovery I have never dreamed of her, and for four years I was baffled by the four words she had spoken; then I understood. Her suggestion seemed ridiculous because I was totally deficient, in education and experience, to carry out her suggestion, but I have tried, and it is hard to tell who is the most surprised, I or my friends, at my success, and I like it better than anything that I have ever attempted. Sincerely yours,

HARRY WINSTON.

Columbus, Ohio.

OF all the cousins on both sides of my family, Emma Allen, on my father's side, was the one that I loved most. I fairly idolized her. She seemed to feel the same way toward me.

Late in the fall of 1916, after I had fed and rubbed down the horses, I lay down on a pile of straw in the cutting room of the barn.

I was awakened a little later by a sound somewhere near me. As I raised to my elbow to listen I could hear nothing. But I noticed that the growing dusk had changed to the black of night.

Just as I started to arise and go to the house a sound attracted my attention in the far end of the cutting room. Turning around as quick as possible I was startled to see through the dark, the form of my cousin as plain as I had ever beheld her in broad daylight. She looked more charming and beautiful than ever, and seemed to be trying to speak to me, but from some cause could not.

When I had recovered my wits so as to speak, a distant train sounded out a long blast from its whistle. Before the sound had died away, Emma threw up her arms and said in a voice as natural as I had ever heard her speak:

"Farewell, Lewis; I hear the Reaper coming."

The following morning my experience of the evening before was flashed before me in a form that actually stunned me. A message came stating that Emma Allen had been killed, together with her sweetheart's mother, and a taxicab driver, when a train struck the taxi in which they were riding, while going across the railway crossing.

I do not now look upon ghost stories and strange dreams that people tell about with such contempt as I once did.

A. LEWIS ALLEN.

Beckley, West Va.

The Ghost Who Stole a Bride

(Continued from page 43)

something can be done for the poor chap upstairs." I knew it was too late for that, but I had to quiet her fears.

After a bit she got control of herself and I hunted about for a phone. There was one hidden under a shabby cretonne doll on the table beside Munson's bed, and I called up Hugh Gifford, my best friend, who only recently had taken his medical degree. When I had acquainted him with the facts, he whistled softly.

"I'LL be right over, sure." Then: "Is Beryl still there? Good Lord! Well, get her away immediately. This may develop into an ugly scandal and we don't want her to be involved if it can be helped. Take her home, then come back as soon as you can and I'll meet you. I'll get right over."

Beryl! Of course she must be gotten away at once. What a fool I had been not to realize that.

"Come on, dear," I said gently, "I'm going to take you home. Hugh is coming right over and I'll join him as soon as I'm sure you are safe. And I wouldn't say anything about what has happened to anyone, if you can help it."

Like a dazed child she allowed herself to be led out, and in a few moments I had her home. I left her in care of Mrs. Deems, the widowed aunt with whom she lived, and hurried back to the rooming-house. To my surprise I found Gifford standing on the stoop.

"What's the matter?" I called to him: "Can't you get in?"

"No. I've been ringing the bell for fifteen minutes and nothing happens. Thought I'd wait for you to show up and then see what could be done." His eyes were bright with excitement as he talked.

"Well, let's try the basement door."

I went down into the area-way and pushed the iron-grated door. It opened easily. Hugh joined me, and we climbed up a narrow, dark stairway and found ourselves in the main hall upstairs. A few moments more and we had reached the door of Cosden's room. I turned the handle and went in, but to my amazement the room was empty. Both Mrs. Munson and Cosden's body had disappeared. My face must have shown my amazement, for Gifford whistled softly and said: "Gone, eh?"

"What do you suppose——?" I was speechless with surprise.

He walked across the room to the bathroom door and sniffed the air.

"Um. Took a dose of his own concoction, did he?" said he, musingly.

"Poison?"

"Darned right!" Then: "Well, what are we going to do?"

"We might go down to the landlady's room, shall we?"

"Come on. Where is it?"

I led the way back to the room I had so recently left, but it was empty.

"H'm! Darned funny!"

Finally Gifford said: "Well, since there doesn't seem to be anything else to do, we might as well go home. Our play, it seems to me, is to lie low and await developments. What?"

What else could we do? But the days that followed were nerve-wracking for all of us, I can assure you. We watched the papers breathlessly for any word of the suicide, but none of them carried a line about it.

"You're sure he was dead?" Gifford asked me that question so often I began to doubt my own conviction. I had been sure but—well, perhaps in the excitement, I had been too hasty. His heart beat may have slowed down without actually stopping.

"But the poison? Even if he were still alive when I left him, surely it would kill him in a very few moments?"

"It would—unless the Munson woman gave him an antidote immediately—but then, it's extremely unlikely she would know what to give him, isn't it?" Then: "But how do we know he actually swallowed the stuff? The fact that we found it on the broken glass in the bathroom doesn't prove he actually drank it. He might have poured it down the sink."

"Yes—of course. But the way he toppled over——"

"Might have been vertigo—oh, one of half a dozen things. How do we know?"

IT was all very disturbing. I hoped Gifford's surmise was right, and that Cosden was still alive. Somehow the sight of the poor chap lying there limp, cold, and dishevcled, haunted my mind and refused to be put aside.

To make matters worse, Beryl, who is naturally very highly strung, was horribly upset at the whole business, and a day or two after the experience at Mrs. Munson's, complained that she was being haunted by a ghost. Just the state of her nerves, Gifford said, and of course I agreed with him. But when, morning after morning, she appeared, all white and shaken, and told tales of waking in the night either to the consciousness that someone was in her room, or an actual vision of something she declared was the ghost of Cosden, I decided that something drastic must be done.

"Why don't you persuade her to marry you right away?" said Gifford, when I talked it over with him. "You were planning to summer in Maine, weren't you? Well, a change of scene and the sort of care and devotion you could give her would be a God-send right now. You'd have her on her feet again in no time."

Of course it was the thing to do! But it was almost impossible to persuade Beryl to do it. She seemed terrified at the idea.

"Something awful will happen, Stanley," she said, her voice quavering. "I just know it will. Cosden—Cosden will do something——"

"But, dear, we're reasonably sure Cosden is dead. Even if he isn't, how is he to know where we are, or that we are married, even? We needn't tell a soul but Hugh and Aunty Deems, and by the time we return from Maine, everything will have straightened itself out."

"But, Stanley I—I'm afraid."

It took all my powers of persuasion, but at last she consented. The night it was finally decided I went to bed with an easier mind than I had had at any time since the beginning of this troublesome business. Things seemed to be pretty well settled, now, and in two more days we'd be off to Maine. I fell asleep dreaming of the smell of the pine trees.

I don't know how long afterward I suddenly found myself wide awake with a very definite feeling that someone was in the room. I lay there perfectly quiet for a moment, then cautiously opened my eyes, and the blood almost froze in my veins. Something was standing at the foot of my bed—a shadowy, irregular bulk, scarcely discernible in the darkness—with a glowing, luminous face that seemed to be peering about from side to side. It seemed to clear, to take form——

It was Beryl! Had she died? Or was this her astral body—or what?

FOR a mad moment I was almost paralyzed with sheer, stark terror, and I could feel the hair slowly rising on my head. Then reason reasserted itself. Ghosts! Bah! I closed my eyes for a moment and buried my head in the pillow. When I opened them there was no trace of anything. An optical delusion, I told myself. I hastily switched on the electric light. The room was empty. Good Lord! This thing seemed to be getting me too, I thought, climbing out of bed. I went into the living room and turned on the lights in there. Nothing! No trace of anything. A stiff breeze was blowing the curtains through the open windows, and I went over and closed them. One opened onto a fire-escape. "Could the—the vision——?" I leaned out and looked up and down the ladder, but there was no trace of anything. Overhead the stars were still twinkling, though the first traces of dawn were already visible in the sky. Lord! What an experience! My nerves must be going back on me. I'd better see Gifford. I turned off the lights and went back to my bedroom. The feeling of horror clung to me, though, in spite of all I could do to argue it away, and I lay there for the remainder of the night, lights blazing, unable to face the ordeal of darkness in that room again.

I called Beryl early in the morning. I could not help being anxious about her. Her voice reassured me, but her words struck a deadly premonition to my heart.

"I had the strangest dream last night, dear," she said. "I dreamed that I came to you—to warn you, tell you of some terrible danger——"

I laughed at the trouble in her voice, but my heart was heavy. Had Beryl really come to me in spirit to warn me of—what?

The day was a busy one, what with doing the necessary shopping and making arrangements for our trip, and after an early dinner with Beryl, I left her to go to bed, while I attended to some last minute correspondence. I had been writ-

ing at my desk for an hour or more, when I suddenly had the strange feeling that someone was gazing steadily at me—someone inimical. There was a mirror on the wall in front of me, and I glanced cautiously into it, and for the second time in twenty-four hours my blood froze in horror. There, on the fire-escape, was a man waving a revolver at me, grimacing like a mad man through the glass. It seemed hours, though I suppose it was really only a matter of seconds, that I sat there fascinated, watching that wavering revolver. The man was solid, real—and the man was Cosden! But Cosden was dead!

With a tremendous effort, I pulled myself together. Ghosts didn't carry revolvers, I told myself savagely. Cosden probably lived, if the truth were known. He had threatened me, and then pretended to commit suicide to throw me off my guard. I saw the whole thing now. As all this darted through my mind, I opened the top drawer of my desk casually and peered within. Yes, thank God, it was still there! In a flash I whisked out my automatic, wheeled about toward the window and fired.

THERE was a crash as the window-pane shattered into a thousand pieces, and the figure outside crumpled up and disappeared. Jenkins, my man, came tearing into the room, aroused by the shot, and after a hurried glance outside which showed that the marauder had vanished, I sent him tearing down to the court-yard into which the fire-escape lead. I rushed to the roof to prevent the thing from escaping that way. But it was all in vain. There was not a sign of anyone at either end, and after searching for half an hour or more, we finally gave it up. But I don't mind telling you that by this time I was beginning to be upset. There was grave danger from this maniac, and I had better take steps to stop him.

I telephoned Gifford at once and he came right over.

"You're quite sure—quite, quite sure, Stanley—that you actually saw this thing?" he asked seriously, after listening to my story.

"Good Lord, man, don't be an idiot! Of course I saw him—or it! Do you think I've been having hallucinations?"

"Well, you've been under a strain, you know, and then with all the tales Beryl has been telling and everything—well, even the strongest of us go to pieces sometimes."

"Oh, for the love of Mike—well, maybe you're right, Hugh, but just the same I'm sure I saw this thing, and I'm beginning to believe that Beryl's visitations may not have been a thing of her imagination after all. If Cosden is actually still alive and trying to make trouble, this is just the sort of crazy thing he'd be apt to do."

"By Jove, Stan, you may be right! If that bird is at large, just as you say, he's apt to do any fool thing. You and I will have to find out at once just what the situation is, and then do something about it." He was all excitement now. "Tell you what. We'll go down to his place again and see if he is there, or if anyone in the house knows where he is. There has been about enough mystery to this thing, and it's time we cleared it up."

I agreed with him, and we were soon speeding on our way down to Mrs. Munson's. A pleasant-faced little woman answered our ring. Mrs. Munson was not at home, she said, and she was just one of the roomers. Yes, Mr. Cosden lived here. Oh, we knew his room, did we? All right, we could go right up.

We found his door was unlocked, and without knocking we pushed it open. So far as we could tell, the room was just as we had left it a week before. Nothing seemed to have been touched, and the dust had settled over everything.

"Darned queer!" said Gifford, after we had carefully examined the room. "Let's go down and question that woman some more."

We hunted her up, but she could tell us nothing about Cosden. Come to think of it, she didn't remember seeing him about much lately. No, not for over a week. Perhaps he was away. Mrs. Munson? Oh, she was in and out all the time. She had a place, you know, out Woodbridge way, and spent about as much time there as she did in town. No, not a rooming house, just a little place with a lot of ground around it. Had she seen her during the last week? No, come to think about it, she hadn't. Would Mr. Cosden be apt to be out at Mrs. Munson's country place? The little woman seemed really embarrassed. No—well, perhaps he might—she really couldn't tell—they were very good friends, of course—Mrs. Munson seemed to know him very well indeed—but of course—no, she really couldn't tell. The house? Well, did we know that part of the country? Well, after you struck the main road—followed a description of the exact location of Mrs. Munson's country place.

FINALLY we thanked the woman, and returned to my apartment. It was pretty late by now, and we figured that nothing more could be done until morning. After all, as soon as the wedding was over Beryl and I would be speeding away from the vicinity, and, since no one knew of our plans, it was unlikely that Cosden would follow us. While we were away Hugh could keep his eyes open and take what steps were necessary.

Gifford offered to stay at my place for the night, and I must say I accepted his offer with a feeling of gratitude and relief. If anything more was to happen that night, I'd be darned glad to have someone with me.

But nothing did happen—at least not until we were at breakfast the following morning. I heard the telephone ring and then Jenkins appeared in the doorway. Something in his face immediately alarmed me and I jumped up, turning over a chair in my haste.

"What is it?" Gifford, too, had sensed trouble.

"It's Mrs. Deems, sir. She seems upset, sir. Miss Beryl——"

I waited to hear no more but dashed out to the phone. Mrs. Deems' voice sounded tremulous, hysterical, as it came to me over the wire.

"Oh, Stanley, something terrible has happened! Beryl has just disappeared and we don't know where she has gone."

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"Disappeared? But when? Are you sure? Didn't she leave any word, any clue, anything?" I tried to hold the terrible apprehension I was feeling, in check.

"Not a thing, Stanley. Oh, it's terrible!" She was sobbing so she could hardly talk.

"Aunty Deems, try not to go to pieces. Hugh Gifford is here with me and we'll be right over. There is probably some simple explanation to the whole thing, you know. Don't let yourself get upset like this until we've investigated every possibility." By the time I hung up the receiver I was shaking in every limb.

Gifford was standing in the doorway, his face white.

"Beryl——?"

"She's disappeared, Hugh——" But he waited for no more.

"Good God! Come on!" He seized me by the arm and together we hurried down the hall.

"Sounds like serious business," he said, panting as we tore along. "If what we suspect about Cosden is true—better just stop in at the house long enough to make sure there really are no clues, then get right out to the Woodbridge place as quick as we can make it."

At the house we found that there was not a clue. Beryl had gone to bed soon after I left her. When she failed to appear at breakfast, Mrs. Deems went to her room and discovered that she was gone. The bed had been slept in, and her clothing was piled on a chair just as she had left it the night before. It didn't seem possible that she wasn't somewhere in the house, yet a thorough search from cellar to attic proved conclusively that she was not. Mrs. Deems was certain she wore only her night clothes when she disappeared. Indeed most of her clothing had been packed for the trip, and the few remaining garments were still hanging in the closet.

WE did our best not to alarm the old lady, but I can tell you we were both badly scared as we climbed into Gifford's car and drove off at breakneck speed toward Woodbridge.

"Looks like a plain case of abduction, but I think we're on the right track, old man." Good old Hugh was doing his best to buck me up, and I appreciated it. But no one will ever know what I suffered during that half hour's ride. And this was to have been my wedding day!

"If it is Cosden, and he's harmed her in any way," I said, through clenched teeth, "I'll kill him with my bare hands, so help me God!"

"Steady, old man!" The car pitched ahead at even greater speed.

It's a wonder we weren't held up by the traffic officers, but luck seemed to be with us. At that hour of the morning the roadway was practically deserted, and we tore along unmolested. We had no trouble finding the Munson place, thanks to the woman downtown. The house itself, a ramshackle affair badly in need of paint, stood in the center of perhaps twenty acres of wild, over-run country. The morning had been dark and lowering, and as we entered the Munson grounds a terrific wind started and the first few drops of rain began to fall.

As we drove up, the place looked deserted, and there was no answer to our repeated knockings. I tried the door and found it locked, as were the windows opening onto the porch. These latter, though, were the old-fashioned kind easily opened with a knife, and I immediately started to pry open one of the locks. There had been a constant pounding somewhere in back of the house, as we stood there trying to get in, and it suddenly occurred to Gifford that this should be investigated.

"You go on in, Stan," he said, as I finally succeeded in raising the window, "and I'll go around back and see what's what. Join you in a minute." And he was off.

I climbed in through the open window and found myself in a musty, badly-ventilated room, evidently the parlor. No sign of anyone. I crossed to a door in the opposite wall, and entered another equally unpleasant, equally deserted room. The next door lead into a wide hall, illuminated only by what little light came through a dusty pane of glass in the front door, and full of strange and ominous shadows. I crossed the hall and entered another dim room, and then I discovered a faint light coming from a transom over another doorway. My heart pounded madly with suspense and excitement, as I crossed the room on tiptoe. I thrust my ear against the door. Not a sound. I stooped down and tried to look through the keyhole, but it was stuffed up. After waiting there at least two minutes for some sort of sound I decided that the room was unoccupied; but a strange fear, a sort of premonition, held me back, and I almost had to force myself to turn the handle of the door and push it open.

For a moment I stood there, dazzled by the electric light, trying to get my bearings. The room seemed deserted. Then my eye fell upon a sight so horrible it rooted me to the spot.

On the floor lay the body of Cosden, covered with something resembling an old red table cover, and across it lay the prostrate form of the Munson woman, a revolver still clutched in her hand, one side of her head a horrible bullet wound.

I DON'T yet know how long I stood there in stupefied horror. It was the arrival of Gifford that finally brought me back to my senses.

"Good God, Stan!" he exclaimed, clutching my arm. "Both of them!"

His face went deadly white, and for a moment we just stood there helplessly. Then: "We must find Beryl. She's here somewhere, I'm sure of it."

"Beryl? Here? How do you know?" New terror seized me.

"Her car is out in a shed behind the house. It was the door of the shed blowing in the storm that made all the noise."

"My God! Come on, Hugh—quick! We may not be a moment too soon. God knows what they've done to her!" I was almost beside myself as we rushed from room to room, vainly hunting for my sweetheart. Finally, when we had about given up hope, we came upon a tiny, locked door at the top of the house.

"Here, help me with this," I said, pushing my shoulder heavily against it.

He was at my side instantly, and in a moment the combined weight of our bodies sent the door crashing in. We fell upon the floor of a small attic-like room and it took only a second to get upon our feet. There, on the floor, we found Beryl, a lifeless-looking little figure wrapped in an old coat, her hair disheveled, her bare feet encased in bedroom slippers.

"Oh, God, Hugh!" I rushed to her side and gathered her up in my arms. "Is she dead? Tell me she isn't dead!" I was frantic with apprehension.

He felt of her pulse, listened to her heart, and finally, taking a small mirror from his pocket, held it to her lips.

"She lives," he said quietly, "but it's well we came when we did."

Drawing a small flask from his pocket, he forced some of the contents down her throat. Then we chafed her hands and the area over her heart, and, after what seemed like endless hours, her eyelids trembled slightly and the color began to come back into her lips. Slowly her eyes opened and she regarded us with an utterly blank, dazed expression. Gradually she seemed to realize that I was there with her, and with a pathetic little moan, she reached up and put her arms about my neck.

"Oh, Stanley, Stanley!" she whispered, and tears began to pour down her cheeks.

"It's all right, now, dear, Stanley's with you," I reassured her, and she lay there silently for awhile, clutching at me as though she would never let go. Then she said: "Stanley, take me home—oh, take me home!"

Gifford had been hovering in the background. He came forward and whispered to me: "She's right, Frazer. Better get her out of here. We'll carry her down to the car and you can drive her home. I'll follow in her machine."

"But—the things downstairs?"

"Leave that to me. Your job is getting Beryl home."

I CARRIED her downstairs and out through the rain to the car, holding the coat close about her. I shall never forget that ride home through the pouring rain, Beryl lying there on the back seat, sobbing and moaning almost without stopping. My own nerves were about gone, what with my fears for her and the terrible sight I just had witnessed. Mrs. Deems, when Beryl actually was safe under her own roof again, rose to the occasion and took complete charge of the situation. She put the girl into a hot bath, then into bed, and made her drink hot tea. Then Gifford arrived, driving Beryl's car, and went up at once to look at his patient.

Poor little Beryl! In spite of everything we could do for her, she lay there trembling and shaking as though with a chill; then a raging fever took possession of her, and delirium set in. My heart bled as she lay there moaning, or started up in sudden terror, shrieking that she saw a ghost and begging me to save her from "him." For days it looked as though she would go out of her head completely and both Hugh and I were at her side constantly, all other interests completely forgotten in our anxiety for her. Then, gradually, the fever passed

and though still very weak, little Beryl was at last on the road to recovery. And for the first time I had leisure to think about other things—particularly about that scene in the kitchen at Woodbridge.

"What did you do about the bodies out there?" I asked Hugh.

"Oh—that?" He hesitated. "Well, nothing, really. I looked closely at the bodies, then left them."

"Without notifying anyone?"

He was silent for a moment. "Perhaps it wasn't exactly the most ethical thing in the world," he said slowly, "but what else could I do? If I had notified the police we would all have been in for publicity and an investigation and—well, it would have been damned unpleasant, especially for Beryl. I didn't know—we don't know yet, for that matter—how she came to be out there, and—well, you have to protect a girl from that kind of publicity. 'Found In Deserted House With Two Corpses, Clad Only In Night Clothes.' Can't you just see the scareheads in the newspapers?"

The idea gave me a cold chill. We sat there in silence for a moment, then he said: "I suppose you haven't seen the papers?"

"No."

"Well, the bodies were found the very day we were out there—I knew, of course, they would be, sooner or later. It seems the Munson woman was a bad egg—known to the police for several little escapades, and, after investigating the case superficially, they put it down as murder and suicide."

"Good Lord!"

"So that's cleared up." There was another moment of silence, then: "If only we could get Beryl to talk—oh, I know she can't be upset now. You don't have to tell me that. But if she ever feels up to it, she can throw a lot of light on the thing. You know, of course, that your theory about Cosden is all wrong?"

"No, I didn't know. How do you make that out?"

"Well, he had been dead for days when we found him."

"He had?" I could scarcely believe it.

"Not a doubt in the world about it. It was only a matter of hours with the woman, but Cosden — funny thing, though," he broke off, "there was a bullet hole right in the middle of his chest."

"A bullet hole!" My mind raced back to the figure on the fire-escape, and the shot I had fired at it. Was it possible——?

"You're sure he was dead that—that long?"

"Sure thing. The papers said so, too. Poisoning was given as the cause of death. They couldn't explain the shot unless the Munson woman had fired it into him just for good measure."

AND Beryl's story, when at last she was able to talk about it, only added to the mystery. It wasn't until weeks later that she told us the whole experience, as nearly as she could remember it. She was awakened that morning just as the first light of dawn was beginning to show in the sky, by a figure she insisted was Cosden's ghost. She said it wore his clothes, and looked as he had looked just before he toppled over after taking the poison. It pointed a long finger at her, just as he had done that day at Munson's, and in a deep, sepulchral voice ordered her to get up and put on her coat. Half paralyzed with fear, she had done as directed. Then, almost as though under a hypnotic spell, she followed the thing through her bedroom window, out onto the porch, back to the garage, and into her car.

Once in the car, she seemed to recover from the paralyzing terror that had gripped her, enough to attempt a mad dive toward the ground, but the thing had reached out and grabbed her in an icy grip, and after that she knew no more. When she recovered consciousness she was stretched out on the seat behind and the car was speeding along like the wind, the thing sitting huddled over the wheel, a battered hat jammed down on its head. She lay there, too terror stricken to move, and finally, in the light of the dawn, they drew up behind a house. Yes, it must have been the Munson place, though she didn't remember much about it. They drove into a dark shed, and she tried to scream for help, tried to get away. Indeed she did succeed in getting out of the car and making for the door, but the thing was following her, was catching her by the hair, was dragging her back. She turned, frantically, to fight it off and was conscious again of the hypnotic horror of the face, now glowing strangely in the darkness, coming closer, and closer. The next thing she knew, she was lying in my arms in the attic room.

Could it have been the Munson woman, as Gifford insists, trying to wreak vengeance upon us for causing Cosden's suicide? Was it, as Beryl firmly believes, actually the ghost of Cosden? Did Beryl's astral self really come to my room that night to warn me of that horror approaching us?

I wish I knew!

The Man Who Paid

(*Continued from page 42*)

known no sleep since it occurred. I cannot face my classes and lecture on the laws of science. I always have believed that every phenomenon can be explained by hard and fast scientific laws. I have always laughed at the so-called manifestations of the spirit world. And yet, this murder cannot be explained by any natural laws. I feel as though the scientific platform upon which I have built my life is about to crumble away beneath my feet. I still refuse to accept the supernatural—God, how I hate the word! Yet I see no other explanation for the murder."

ARNOLD paused to moisten his dry lips and throat. He ran his fingers through his long hair, and his fingers trembled. Then he continued.

"Here is what I know about it. Bob Clark, the man who was murdered, was the best student I ever had. He was in my Physics course three years ago. Since then we have been intimate friends. He often consulted me about his work, and I was always glad to give him help and advice.

"Two weeks ago he came to me and he was in a terrible condition. It hurt me to see him, a man over six feet in height, so shaken with fear. His fine face was drawn and there was an uncanny stare out of his eyes. I could not understand it, for he had always been a very substantial person, unemotional, and with a strong will.

"'Doctor Arnold,' he said, before we had time to be seated in my study, 'I have been visited by the dead. My God, I am frightened. It is driving me mad, and I am afraid my wife will see this fear in me. She is in no condition to be troubled, for as you know, her baby was born yesterday.'

"I gave Bob a drink and managed to calm him, and he told me of the vision he had seen. Three summers ago he worked with a bridge construction gang about forty miles from Houston in the little town of East Benard. It is composed almost altogether of ignorant foreign people who live in a very squalid condition.

"Most of the women are ugly and fat; sometimes even the young girls are homely and unattractive. They work in the fields along with the men. They go barefooted and wear few clothes in the cotton fields. Quite often, according to Bob's story, you will find girls at the age of twenty, picking cotton, dressed in a calico dress and nothing more. It is nothing uncommon to see their bodies exposed by a chance wind. Some of the girls have a youthful charm in spite of their coarseness. Their bodies have soft curving lines even though they do hard work, because they eat a great deal of fatty food.

"Bob met one of these girls returning from work one evening. She was pretty, and her comely face and lithe young figure beneath her loose-fitting cotton dress fascinated him. Ordinarily, he would not have been attracted by such a girl, but he had missed the companionship of the girls of his set, and of his women companions at school.

"By some pretext he contrived to walk home with her, and thereafter he met this girl every evening. No one knew of their meetings. He continued to meet the girl secretly until fall when he returned to the University.

"BOB told me that the girl loved him fiercely, and that he had a sort of love for her, even though he was engaged to the woman who is now his widow. He never told the foreign girl his true name, and he soon forgot her after he returned to school. He was married the next spring.

"But on the night before his marriage, he was visited by this girl, Bob declared. He was awakened just before dawn by the cry of a baby in his room. The room was dark except for a diffused, glowing, blue light and in the midst of this blue light was the girl of his past holding a new born baby in her arms. The vision was indistinct, and before Bob was able to see more, the vision disappeared into the blue light and the light itself slowly faded away. Bob was terrified, and turned on his light.

"The floor was wet as if wet clothing had dripped upon it and there were smears of yellow clay upon it.

"In the afternoon paper Bob read the account of the suicide of the young girl. Three months before, her family had learned her secret, and had driven her away from home. A clergyman's family at East Benard had taken her in. The child was born three days before her suicide. She was found in a large, clay, water pool behind the clergyman's home. Her child was clasped to her bosom, drowned, as was the mother.

"Bob was frantic, but he had to go through with his wedding. The vision did not appear again, and Bob soon forgot it in joy of his wife.

"The vision never returned until two weeks ago, which was the night after the day his child was born. Bob said that it appeared in exactly the same manner as upon the first occasion, except that it stayed longer and was more distinct. The baby seemed months older at this second appearance. The girl stood there, in one arm her baby and in her hand—a murderous Bohemian knife, similar to those used by the Bohemian farmers to kill pigs. She slowly advanced toward Bob with the knife gripped hard in her hand. When she was a few feet from him, Bob screamed. The baby in the girl's arm moved and a low wail escaped from its lips. The girl stopped and slowly disappeared into the blue light surrounding her, and it slowly faded away also. This time the floor was dry and unmarked by clay.

"When Bob finished the story, he was trembling again from head to foot. Beads of sweat stood out on his forehead, and he reached for the whiskey. I was in a great quandary as to what to do. Of course, I thought Bob was sick and suffering from strain due to the birth of his wife's child. I told him so. I refused to believe in the thing at all and told him to forget it. He became furiously angry and left me. Three days later I talked to his wife's nurse over the phone and learned that Bob had locked himself in his room and was refusing to see everyone. I went to his home, but he would not see me.

"Three days ago I was summoned to Bob's house, just after dawn, by the nurse. She said that Bob had been murdered and that his wife wanted me. I went immediately.

"WHEN I was admitted to the room, the body had not yet been moved. It lay across the bed in a crimson pool. Stuck in Bob's chest up to the hilt, was a knife. I am sure it was the one Bob had described to me.

"The nurse slept in the room adjoining Bob's and the only door in Bob's room opened into the nurse's room. She was awakened by a terrible scream in Bob's room. She tried the door but it was locked.

"Neighbors were summoned and the door was battered open. It was locked and bolted from within. There were only two windows in the room and both of them had iron bars across them, as you will find in some old Texas homes.

"The nurse declared that immediately following the scream, she heard the wail of a baby and the voice of a woman in the room."

The Girl Who Lived with the Dead

(*Continued from page 48*)

I thought of Alice. The absurdity of Corbin having these two spied on seemed clear to me.

It was hard to wait until half past two, hard because I was eager to see Anita and hear the answer that my heart told me she would give to the question I had asked her the night before, but harder still, in a way, because I was constantly haunted by the fear that at any moment Luigi might step in again with some new terror.

I could not forget his last threat—that the next death would be that of some one near and dear to Mr. Kennedy. I tried to tell myself that Luigi was losing his power over Anita, since he had not been able to keep her from coming home, even though no ransom money had been paid. But I did not feel comfortable.

I WAS very tense, and quaking inwardly when at last I drew Anita's roadster up to the front steps. It seemed to me that there was an unnaturally strained look in her eyes as she came toward me. Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy had come to the door with her. I wondered if perhaps she had talked with them about me, and they had not felt like giving their approval. But they waved good-bye so cheerfully, that I decided that something else must be the matter.

I was not prepared, however, for the thing that happened just as she was about to step into the car. She stopped suddenly and began staring down the driveway. Alice had just driven in through the gate and was coming up slowly. Hackley was with her. But Anita didn't seem to be looking at them. She seemed to be looking at something much nearer, and sudden terror was in her eyes.

Then came the same shriek of horror that we had all heard before. She shrank away from the thing she seemed to be looking at.

"No! No!" And she screamed wildly. "Go away! I won't obey you! I won't! I won't!"

I stared in the direction of her gaze, but could see nothing. Search the shrubbery as I would, I could find no sign of Luigi concealed there. And yet, I knew as well as if she had called out his name that it was to Luigi that she was talking.

Mrs. Kennedy ran down the steps toward us. Alice's car stopped near us and Hackley sprang out. Mr. Kennedy shouted for Corbin and then followed Mrs. Kennedy. But Anita seemed not to hear or see any of them. She was shrinking and cowering as if in the face of some horrible monster.

"Oh, Ross," she cried. "He's coming nearer. He's freezing the blood in my veins. Don't let him touch me. Oh, don't let him touch me!"

I stood beside her already. At her appeal I threw an arm protectingly around her shoulders.

"It's all right, Anita," I said soothingly. "It's all right. Nobody's going to hurt you."

She gave a sob and turned full against my breast, burying her face against my shoulder, shuddering from head to foot, while her hands went up around my neck drawing my head down convulsively, as if the nearness of me meant protection.

There was a sweet thrill in that frightened embrace. I held her close, and laid my face along side of hers.

As she touched me, a strange chill swept over me. I felt suddenly weak. My arms stiffened. My whole body grew rigid. It became impossible to breathe. My chest simply would not expand to draw in the air.

I knew that I was dying—and at the caress of the girl I loved. Why did death stalk Anita's pathway? Did the sinister spirit of Luigi, the hypnotist, control her, or——

I swayed unsteadily under her embrace. I saw Hackley reach out and catch me with horror in his eyes. I fought for consciousness as suffocation gradually overwhelmed me. Then I lost consciousness.

I had no sense of the passing of time. I simply became conscious again. Everything still seemed dark. I felt unutterably weak. For a little while I was not strong enough to lift my eyelids.

Then I felt a soft hand on my forehead, and I opened my eyes.

CLOSE to my face Anita's eyes caught mine and looked down into them. They grew big suddenly.

"Ross! Ross!" came a little, joyful, half choked cry.

Then something warm and wet dropped on my cheek. Her eyes had filled with tears and one had spilled over. She dropped on her knees beside the head of my bed and put her face down close to mine.

"You didn't die! You didn't die!" she sobbed. "You came back to me! Oh, I am so happy!"

At first I didn't understand. I only saw the girl I loved kneeling beside me, and felt her soft hair touch my cheek,

while her voice told me better than her words even, that I meant something in her life.

Then, as I realized that I was lying down—in fact actually in bed, in an unfamiliar room, and that the room was lighted by electricity, not daylight, I began to get a vague idea of what had happened. I had been stricken down by that mysterious hidden hand just as Wolf had been stricken down. But by some miracle I had been saved from death.

I wasn't strong enough to speak for quite a while, but simply lay there and, weak as I was, grew happier and happier as the moments went by and Anita still knelt beside me.

At last, however, I tried to speak and managed a half-whisper;

"Anita!"

She lifted her face and looked at me with eyes that shone through her tears.

"What is it, Ross?" she asked with an eager tenderness.

"Tell me what happened."

But she shook her head.

"Dr. Parish says you must be absolutely quiet and have no excitement," she said.

I didn't have the strength to protest. It was easier just to look at her, and wait. Presently I realized that her two hands held one of mine, and that her eyes held in them messages far more important to me than any mere explanation of what had happened could have been. So I lay quietly and waited, quite content.

After a while Dr. Parish came in, and with him Corbin. Anita rose shyly and stood at the foot of my bed, first announcing triumphantly that I was conscious.

They came over and looked at me, Dr. Parish feeling my pulse, and nodding with satisfaction.

"Well," he said, "we've come to, eh? Good. Now just rest a bit and probably you'll be a lot better to-morrow."

"I'm feeling better every minute," I said. "What happened?"

"We'll talk about that later," he said. "Try to go to sleep now. Don't talk to him, Miss Anita."

They went out. Anita looked at me, blushing prettily.

"Come and sit by me," I said, using a sick person's prerogative.

She did so, and I felt weakly for her hand till I found it. Then I closed my eyes.

PERHAPS an hour later I woke up feeling much stronger. Anita was still there. I looked up at her earnestly.

"You do—care——" I started.

Her eyes grew moist and glistened. She blushed, but did not turn away.

"Yes," she said very low. "I—I do, Ross. I was going to tell you this afternoon and then—this happened. Oh Ross, I didn't know how much—I—needed you—till I thought I had lost you."

"Then, as soon as I'm all right, you'll marry me?"

I asked the question eagerly, for already the thought had returned to me that, if I could marry her and carry her off with me, we could escape the monster that kept bringing horror into her life.

The color mantled her cheeks more than before. Then it left her and she turned her face away.

"Oh Ross, I can't—with this hanging over me. I can't put you in more danger."

"Yes you can," I protested. "Or rather we'd both go away where Luigi couldn't find us. Will you, Anita?"

But she put a soft finger on my lips, smiled down at me, and rose.

"You mustn't talk," she said. "I'm going for Dr. Parish."

Presently he came, again accompanied by Corbin. This time they saw how much recovered I was and they told me what had happened, which after all was nothing more than I had guessed. I had been stricken down, just as Wolf had, at the moment that I was trying to protect and steady Anita. But for some reason I had not died. Corbin was sure I had been poisoned too, as the dog had. But he had been unable to explain how the poison had reached me. He was frank in stating his suspicion of Hackley, who was running toward us at the time my collapse began. But he admitted that he did not see how the poison could have been made to reach me.

I asked him if he had searched the shrubbery immediately. He said that he had, but had found no trace of any intruder. I was puzzled, and I could see that he was too. But when he left me, he advised me to keep my eye on Hackley and Alice. I shuddered—I couldn't believe that his suspicions had any justification.

He had hardly left when Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy came in. Their happiness over my recovery was truly wonderful. I realized what I owed them for taking me into their lives. I wanted to talk, but they had had their instructions from Dr. Parish, and soon left me.

Almost immediately Alice and, to my surprise, Hackley came in. They, too, were warm and cordial in their expressions of good will over my recovery. I wondered if all this apparent sincerity could possibly be mere sham. I studied Hackley's face, but could detect no hypocrisy in it. They were saying good night, when I remembered that, with me flat on my back, Anita would be lacking what protection I could have given her, and in my anxiety for her, I spoke without thinking.

"Take care of Anita!"

I was surprised to see a flash of understanding pass between them. It puzzled me and gave me a sudden qualm, as did the extra vibrance in Alice's voice as she said, "Yes. Don't worry. We're going to take care of Anita."

Hackley nodded at me in a reassuring way, but took Alice by the arm and seemed to be hurrying her out, lest she might say more.

This puzzled me and worried me. But when, ten minutes later, Anita came into the room again, the shy tenderness in her eyes made me forget everything else.

"The trained nurse has just arrived," she said. "She'll be here in a few minutes."

She sat down beside me. Once more I made her give me her hand to hold. I wanted to ask her again to promise to marry me as soon as I was on my feet, but the knowledge that at any minute the

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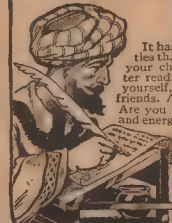

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nurse might come in kept me from doing it. So she sat and we said nothing. Presently, at a step in the hall, she rose.

"Good night, Ross," she whispered.

"Good night," I answered. "Do be careful!"

She nodded brightly, but I could see her lip quiver. After all, how could she be careful? This thing that menaced her was not a thing that she could avoid. It came. It possessed her. Then it left her—having done what harm it could in the meantime. I sighed as she went out and the white garmented nurse entered the room.

I SLEPT that night, but twice I woke with the nightmare fear that Anita had been carried off, and I could not go to sleep again until the nurse had hunted up Corbin and made sure that everything was all right.

When morning came I was much better, but still amazingly weak. Dr. Parish told me that it was a wonder I had lived at all. Corbin, standing beside him, nodded grimly.

"You missed what was coming to you by a hair," he said. "I guess the full dose intended for you didn't hit you."

I nodded, thankful enough for being alive, and not wondering much how it had happened.

"Is Miss Anita all right?" I asked. "Has anything new turned up?"

"Yes. The young lady's all right. It's plain hysteria with her, brought on by the spook tales young Hackley has been telling her. By the way, he's disappeared again—damned funny too: just vanished. Probably went out the back door. Anyway Adams didn't see him leave the house. Nobody appears to know where he is—except the young lady, Miss Alice. She seems to know I've got my eye on him and her, and she's mad. Says it's none of my business where Hackley is: if I want to spy, I've got to do my own spying. I'll get the goods on that young man yet, though, if he ever shows up again."

I shook my head.

"I think you're wrong," I said. "I don't believe for a minute that Hackley is in this. Probably he found out you were watching him and it made him mad."

CORBIN smiled at me pityingly, as if he thought me a great fool. Then he left me. When he was gone I began to wonder if after all I were not such a fool as he thought me. Certainly Hackley had been present part of the time at three out of the four seizures that Anita had suffered, and might easily have had to do with her disappearance, though he had not been seen at the time. His mysterious slipping out of sight and Alice's refusal to tell Corbin where he was to be found were not very reassuring.

I was pondering this when Mr. Kennedy came in. He was looking very haggard and drawn. I could see that the strain of it all was wearing on him terribly. It would have been bad enough to be caught in a trap by Cullen and to face the loss of his entire fortune, or, with no such trouble, to have grappled with the mystery of Luigi's baneful attack. But to have both of these come at the same time was almost more than human spirit could stand. I began to fear that he was going to break under the double strain. But he greeted me cheerfully and lovingly, asking how I felt and nodding with satisfaction as I told him of my growing strength.

"Is there any more news?" I asked eagerly.

He smiled grimly.

"Another slate message," he said. "This time it's me. And our friend promises that there will be no slip as there was in your case. The thing arrived by special delivery this morning."

He spoke calmly, and I knew that he would not let the threat influence his actions. But a chill crept over me. Realizing how helpless I myself had been to combat the attack that had come against me in my effort to protect Anita, I shuddered to think of what might happen to the man to whom I owed so much.

"Do be careful!" I said, and then, on a sudden impulse: "Has Corbin told you of his suspicions of Hackley?"

Mr. Kennedy nodded.

"I can't believe he's right," he said. "But I'm going to keep my eye on him the next time he comes near me."

"How about your fight with Cullen?" I asked. "You're going to win out, of course?"

The lines in his face seemed to deepen.

"I don't know," he said. "I am stripped of my last resource. I can only wait."

He forced a smile and left me.

When Anita came in to see me, Alice was with her. The two put on a very cheerful front in my presence. But it seemed to me that Anita looked tired—deadly tired, as if she had not once closed her eyes during the night, but had lain awake, watching and dreading, as the dark hours dragged by.

I hoped Alice would leave us alone together for a minute at least, but she made no move to do so, and Anita seemed relieved that she did not have to meet the question that she knew I would put to her. I knew as well as if she had told me, however, that she was determined to fight her grim battle to a finish before she would give me the answer that I wanted. But for my part I was equally determined that the minute I was on my feet I would carry her off to some spot where Luigi could not find her. And during the rest of the day I made plans.

AFTER dinner Mr. Kennedy came to my room to help me down to the library, for Dr. Parish thought that to move around and mix with the others would help me to get back to normal. I looked at my benefactor anxiously. He answered my unspoken question with a laugh.

"You see I'm still here," he added. "What's more, things haven't moved against me on the Street. And Cullen has offered to come here to-night and talk things over. I hate to knuckle to him, for he's a skunk. But I've got to think of the rest of you. And after what Mother did, going out alone at night to plead with him, and nearly getting killed, I can't refuse her the satisfaction of having me talk things over at least."

He was regretful but, it seemed to me, more cheerful than he had been in the morning. After he had settled me on the divan in the library with Mrs. Kennedy and Anita and Alice sitting around, talking with at least an appearance of normal brightness, I tried to think that perhaps we might now have come to the turning point; that, with the relief that seemed in sight from financial pressure through Cullen's apparent relenting, Mr. Kennedy might be able to throw his energies into the solution of the personal horror that had come on the family and that some kind of respite and comfort might be ours.

But the strained look that each member of our little group tried so valiantly to keep out of his face kept showing from time to time, and I found it impossible to get away from the feeling of dread that had grown on me from day to day. At any minute I expected to see my benefactor stricken down as I had been struck down by the mysterious unseen hand that I firmly believed to be Luigi's.

Every time I looked at Anita, I wondered how long it would be before she had another of her terrible struggles. I studied her dark, tired eyes when she was not looking at me, and in them I found a haunting fear that increased my own dread a hundred fold. I offered an inward prayer that I would soon be on my feet again and able to carry the sweet, lovely girl away from this menace that beset every moment of her existence.

THE announcement by Jeffries that Mr. Cullen had arrived could not help but cause a slight stir among us; for, though only Mrs. Kennedy and I knew how much Mr. Kennedy had at stake, the girls knew that Cullen was Mr. Kennedy's bitter financial opponent. I saw Mr. Kennedy's face set, and Mrs. Kennedy's lip tremble. She half rose with him, but he shook his head.

"I'll see him alone," he said quietly. "I don't want you in the thing at all, Mother. There's going to be no pleading."

Corbin, who had sat watching in a distant corner of the room, looked up.

"Who is this Mr. Cullen?" he asked.

"My business opponent at the present time," Kennedy answered. "I won't need you as a body-guard, Corbin."

He went out. We looked at one another somewhat tensely in spite of all our efforts to the contrary. A minute later Anita rose nervously and left the room. I was glad to see Alice follow her almost immediately, for I feared to have her alone for even the briefest space of time.

Perhaps three minutes passed.

Then our raw nerves were brought shudderingly taut by the sound of Anita's voice raised in the scream of terror that always came with one of her strange seizures.

Each one of us three sprang up and started for the door. But Corbin was first into the hallway, closely followed by Mrs. Kennedy. As my weak and unsteady steps carried me across the room, I could hear Anita's fear-stricken voice in its horribly familiar pleading, broken now and then by brave efforts at defiance of the will that tried to impose itself on her; and my heart bled for her, while I did my best to get to her side.

But suddenly, mixed with Anita's piteous cries, came a sharp, peremptory ex-

clamation from Corbin, with something of a snarl in it.

"Hands up, you! I've got you this time! Come out of there!"

At the same time I reached a point in the hall where I could see Corbin at Mr. Kennedy's door, his hand on the shoulder of a man who had half entered, while at the same time he thrust the muzzle of an automatic revolver against the man's ribs. A second later he had jerked the man into sight.

The man was Hackley!

Anita's screams continued, increasing in their horror if that was possible. They came from Mr. Kennedy's business room.

Corbin yanked Hackley out into the hall and backed him viciously across to the front door, jabbing threateningly with his revolver at each step. This I saw as I staggered into the room where Anita was meeting her thing of fear.

A strange sight met my eyes. Anita was facing the doorway where I stood, her eyes, widened with horror, fixed almost on me. She was backing away from me toward a strange man, whom I recognized as undoubtedly Cullen. On each side of her stood Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy, each ready and eager to help her if she would only turn to them, each staring as she was staring, toward me, as if trying to see the thing that she saw.

BEHIND me in the hall there came the sound of a scuffle, and then a shot. Then quick steps and I was thrust aside while Hackley sprang past me with the smoking revolver in his hand. With a cry I put all my strength into a leap and threw my arms about him.

But my weakness was still so great that he was able to shrug me off as if I had been a child.

I was about to spring at him again with what strength I had left, when he thrust the revolver into his pocket and made a commanding gesture to me to stay back.

"Wait!" he ordered in a tense, low whisper. "Look!"

As he spoke I saw that Anita was actually approaching the man whom I had guessed to be Cullen, with the evident idea of getting protection from him.

What did that mean?

To my surprise also, I saw that Cullen was shrinking and cowering away from her. Especially he appeared to avoid the touch of her fluttering hands, fending them off as if they had been snakes.

Suddenly one hand touched him in Anita's pitiful search for protection from the monster that only she saw. He gave a hoarse shriek, hurled her from him, and made a rush for the door.

He was met by Corbin coming in, who grappled with him without at first seeing who it was.

"Hold him!" Hackley said curtly. "You've got the right man this time." He stepped forward and took Anita by the shoulders. "Wake up!" he commanded. "Wake up, Anita! I am Luigi! Wake up!"

With the last word he struck her a sharp blow on the chin with the tips of his fingers.

Anita staggered drunkenly for several seconds and then stared about her wonderingly.

Mr. Kennedy started toward Hackley furiously.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

"Wait!" Hackley answered imperatively.

There was a forcefulness about him that checked us all. He flung out an urgent hand at Cullen.

"Hold him!" he repeated. "I tell you you've got the right man. Now, Anita."

He turned very gently to her and took her by the left wrist.

"Your troubles are over, Anita," he said. "Over; do you hear? Luigi is dead. I'm going to prove it to you. But you've got to help me. Will you?"

She stared at him—as we were all staring, even Corbin, who held Cullen in an iron grip. Her lips quivered, but her head went up bravely. She was utterly different from the girl who had cowered and screamed but a moment before.

"Yes, I'll help you, if I can," she said. "What must I do?"

Hackley cast a glance at Cullen, who was frowning and looking very indignant.

"Mr. Cullen," he said, "confess that you are at the back of all the pain and horror that has touched this house in the past days. Confess that the blackmail, the killing of Wolf, the hypnotizing of this poor girl, the attempt on Ross's life—all of them are a part of your plot against Mr. Kennedy."

"Nonsense! You're crazy!" the man said with a snarl.

"Very well," Hackley answered, "we'll see. Come, Anita, I want you to go over to Mr. Cullen and squeeze his wrist hard with your left hand."

He spoke deliberately, keeping his eyes on Cullen.

Cullen grew pale and his eyes took on a hunted look.

"Let's have done with this foolishness," he said angrily. "Kennedy, I came over here to talk business with you, not to mix up with your family troubles. Tell your man to let me go. I'm going home."

"Wait!" Hackley ordered. "Hold him, Corbin. Now, Anita." He motioned her gently toward Cullen. She went wonderingly. Cullen's eyes grew big with fear, and he began to struggle in Corbin's grasp. As Hackley guided Anita's hand toward Cullen's wrist, the latter became like a veritable madman.

He fought and bit and clawed at Corbin, so that Anita shrank back in doubt and fear.

"Let me go! Let me go!" he screamed. "No! No! Don't let her touch me!"

Cullen ceased his frantic struggles as Anita ceased to advance, but the sweat stood on his forehead and fear was in his eyes. He sank, half fainting, to his knees. Corbin stood looking scornfully at the shrinking creature clinging to his arm. Cullen seemed too weak to move, and Corbin watched the abject figure curiously, making no effort to hold him.

WE stared, understanding nothing, and waited for Hackley's next move.

The latter's brows knit.

"Do you confess?" he asked Cullen.

Cullen licked his lips and hesitated.

"No," he said huskily. "I have nothing to do with it—I don't know what you're talking about."

He tried to speak firmly, but it was plain that he was fighting for self possession. Hackley lifted Anita's left hand, then fell back to watch them both. "Come Anita," he said, "squeeze Cullen's wrist with your left hand."

Cullen showed no fight, and this time Hackley would not let Anita draw back. Pale and shaken, she nevertheless extended her hand. Cullen watched, in a kind of fascinated horror.

Suddenly he screamed aloud.

"Stop her! Stop her!" he cried. "It's murder! My God, it's murder!"

Anita would have drawn back, horrified. Hackley clutched and brought her hand palm down on Cullen's wrist and squeezed it with his own, so that her fingers pressed in.

Cullen moaned suddenly and then slipped limply to the floor, white and motionless. We stared, aghast, and Anita gave a little cry of fear.

But Hackley spoke quickly.

"He's all right," he said. "Scared into a faint, that's all."

Corbin, who had dropped on one knee beside Cullen, looked up, nodding.

"That's all it is," he said, his hand on Cullen's pulse. "He'll be all right in a minute." He rose, facing Hackley. "Now, young man, suppose you tell us what this means. It'll have to be a pretty straight story to pay for that clip you gave me on the jaw out there in the hall."

A trace of a smile crossed Hackley's face. Then he grew serious.

"I'll tell you what I can," he said quietly. "I don't know the whole thing. But I think I've proved that this beast is at the bottom of it."

He looked around at our eager, wondering faces. As he did so, Cullen stirred and opened his eyes. Corbin picked him up by the arms and placed him in a chair. Hackley handed Corbin his automatic, and Corbin held it ready for use, covering Cullen. Then Hackley began his explanation.

"Everything that has happened in this house is a part of this man's plot," he said. "Luigi we believe to be dead. But Cullen has been impersonating him from a distance. He has managed to get letters written to you, Mr. Kennedy, in Luigi's writing. That was not hard, with a photograph of Luigi's personally written confession of murder in his hands. The slate writing of these letters was a fake of course. No spirit medium had anything to do with it, unless he was hired by Cullen, and I doubt even that.

"In the same way he forged letters to Anita, supposed to come from Luigi, and he put a photographic print of one of Luigi's old poster's at the top of the letter. Perhaps you don't know it, but a person who has been hypnotized daily for any length of time can be put into a trance by the hypnotist with the slightest kind of suggestion. I was finding that out, Corbin, the first time your spy lost me.

"In these letters Cullen, posing as Luigi, commanded Anita to fall into a trance of the sort where the subject does not go to sleep, but remains nevertheless under the control of the hypnotist. Then he gave her minute written instructions to do certain things, and at the end of each letter he told her to burn the letter and to forget everything except to carry

out the instructions. I have seen only one of these letters—the last—but it is enough to show how the whole thing was done. I will show it to you and read it to you."

HE drew a folded paper from his pocket and unfolded it. At the top was a picture of Luigi, his brows bent fiercely and his finger pointed at the onlooker. At sight of it Anita gave a little sigh and stiffened, but Hackley shook her and called her sharply by name. She seemed to wake as from a trance. Hackley hid the picture.

"You see the powerful effect of this," he said. "Alice, take Anita into the library. This will be too hard for her." Alice, who had appeared unobtrusively, took Anita by the shoulders, and led her very tenderly from the room.

I wanted to follow, but I saw that Alice could help her as much as I could, and I wanted to hear Hackley's amazing explanation. He unfolded the letter and began to read:

"I am Luigi! You are in my control! Read my commands!

"To-night a Mr. Cullen is coming to talk to Mr. Kennedy. As soon as they are together, go to your room, put on this ring——"

At this point Hackley interrupted his reading to explain:

"He enclosed a ring just like the one that Anita always wears, but it had a devilish little sharp pointed contrivance on the inside of it, with some kind of poison on the point. Anita has it on now. But"—he looked at Cullen—"fortunately for you, I washed the poison off before she put it on."

He turned back to the letter and began reading:

"——go down stairs to the room where Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Cullen are talking. Go in as if to ask a question. The minute you are inside the room, turn around. You will see me, Luigi, standing in the doorway. I will stretch out my hand to you, and you will feel your blood freezing in your veins. You will be terribly afraid. You will scream. You will protest. You will beg me to go away. But I will come toward you. You will back away from me toward Mr. Kennedy. You will cry out to him to help you. When he comes to you, you will throw yourself in his arms, and clasp his head in your hands, pressing hard. Then suddenly you will hear me say: 'Wake up Anita.' And you will wake up. You will forget this letter. You will forget what you have done. You will be dazed. Presently you will go to your room and take off the ring, hiding it under your rug and forgetting it too, till I tell you to get it. All these things you will do with your eyes open—not in sleep, but as if you were awake. Yet you will not remember anything. Burn this letter now, and do as I have told you."

Hackley folded the letter and stood looking at us with tight shut lips. We stood silent and aghast. Then Corbin spoke.

"Young man, you've done a big thing, if you've got this straight. How did you get hold of that letter?"

"I'VE been hiding in Alice's room since last night—we were married yesterday, when you couldn't find either of us—and I have been watching Miss Anita's door. I saw Jeffries go in this morning when Miss Anita was at breakfast. I followed him, took the letter, and made him tell me all he knew, which was that he had been taking dope for a year. He got it first from a man who had approached him, and recently the man had insisted on his delivering what he claimed to be love letters to Miss Anita. He has promised to follow the man to-night and try to find out where he comes from."

"But what makes you think that Cullen is back of this?"

"That was just a guess at first. I knew he had a lot to gain—financially—by breaking up Mr. Kennedy or, if necessary, getting rid of him. Also there was another reason, which I am not going to mention. The best proof that I guessed right is this man's fear of that ring on Miss Anita's finger. You can prove more if you have a man follow Jeffries tonight at ten, when he goes out to get his drug. Or you can send a man over to enter and search Mr. Cullen's house. Ten to one there will be something that is incriminating."

Corbin nodded. His face showed great admiration for Hackley's keenness—an admiration which I for one felt too, and which showed on Mr. Kennedy's and Mrs. Kennedy's faces. But Corbin was not through.

"That's great stuff, boy," he said enthusiastically, "but wait a minute: if the letter told Miss Anita to jab the ring point into Mr. Kennedy, why did she go after Cullen?"

Hackley smiled.

"I made a change in the letter before I let Miss Anita read it," he said. "I put Mr. Cullen's name in place of Mr. Kennedy's. Also I changed all that about forgetting, and made the letter read that she would remember everything, even about all the other letters. I think if we call her, we can find out a good deal more."

HE did call Anita, and bit by bit helped her to recall the whole fiendish business. Detail by detail we searched her mind and showed Hackley to have been right in every point. At the end of the examination, Anita was shaken and horrified at the terrible part she had played as the innocent carrier of death. But that very examination seemed to rid her of the last trace of fear that lingered in her mind about Luigi being alive. She even asked to see the picture of him again. As she looked at it, I felt her hand seek mine and tighten convulsively on it, but she kept steady and gave the photograph look for look.

Then, suddenly she turned to me and, putting her head down on my shoulder, sobbed gently. I put my arms about her, in the presence of them all, and drew her close to me. Then I looked across at Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy.

"We are going to be married too," I said.

Their faces lighted up happily and they came to circle us lovingly with their arms. Presently I led Anita to the library where we could be alone to tell one another the things that lovers have to say.

CORBIN followed up the clues furnished by Hackley, and obtained complete evidence of Cullen's villainy. Incidentally he got a confession from Jeffries that it had been he who, returning from getting his supply of dope, had seen Mrs. Kennedy letting herself into the house after midnight and, thinking her a criminal, had attacked her, only to discover his mistake and escape to the rear of the house when I came to her rescue.

Cullen was tried, convicted of blackmail and attempted murder, and given a heavy sentence.

Shortly afterward Anita and I were married.

And the black shadow of her life is gone forever.

Sheltered By a Shadow

(*Continued from page 29*)

He was handsome, he was big and strong, and he was a blackguard. They planned to marry in the Fall and he came up here to be with Muriel during the Summer.

"They would take long walks and go swimming down in the little cove, and we let them alone for we knew how happy they were together. It was too much happiness for poor Muriel's eager, ardent nature. God knows what tempted her—there's nothing I can say! I should have watched —"

Aunt Betsy's voice broke, and her eyes were streaming. When she went on it was in a weary tone.

"HE left us early in August, promising to be back within the week. He did not return, and no letter came. Muriel became restless, and I was worried, but as yet I did not know what there was to fear. She wrote to him every day, but there was no answer. Her pride would not permit her to go back to town to see him; but as the days passed I could see her fading. A frightened look had come into her eyes;

I heard her moaning at night in her room, and finally, before she had told me the story, I knew the truth.

"She spoke to me after we learned how she had been betrayed. Her lover had taken ship from Boston early in September for the Mediterranean. He had married another woman before going. Never a word did she hear from him; not a message or an excuse. He disappeared, leaving her with her secret. She told me of it one night when I thought she would go mad. She dared not return to town, and it was getting late in the season. Already our guests had departed, knowing that something had happened to destroy her happiness. I waited with her, torn with anxiety; for both of us were helpless.

"One morning when I went as usual to her room I found it empty. Her bed had not been slept in, although her clothing was lying about the room. I seemed to sense the worst. Adam Hopper and his wife were with us then and I roused them and we began a search. I—oh, how can I go on, Doris? It was too awful! Too terrible to tell!"

My aunt buried her face in her hands as if to shut out some dreadful sight. I was strangely moved at this tragic story of the young and fascinating creature I had never known. We sat there some time in silence, and then she spoke in a dull tone.

"We found her at the bottom of the cliff, beneath a high projecting point where she and her—where they had often sat together. She had flung herself from that terrible place to find the peace she would never again have on earth. We buried her in the churchyard here; the people thought it was an accident, for they had never known her secret."

My aunt was almost exhausted with her story, and I led her gently up the road to Cliff Haven. There was a new bond between us; I understood her now and I determined that from now on we should be better friends. But her story had not changed my mind about my own affair.

Next day I found a letter from Jerry telling me that by the end of the week he would be in Bassett. He was coming up in his car, and could hardly wait, he said, until I was at his side, with all the Maine woods to play in. I thrilled at his letter and my pulses leaped at the thought of seeing him again. How I had missed him in the past solitary weeks!

I walked back in high elation, hugging the letter to my bosom. I would re-read it again and again in my room.

A storm was blowing up from the sea and I hurried to escape the shower, but I was too late and before I turned into the gate I was thoroughly drenched. I ran to my room to change my clothing.

I re-read Jerry's letter, and then, because it was so rain-soaked that I could not carry it, and as I did not dare to leave it in the drawer, where someone might find it, I tore it up and threw it in the waste basket.

TWO days later Jerry came himself. I had managed to escape from Aunt Betsy, and was there to meet him when he drove up to the hotel at Bassett. How we kept out of each other's arms I do not know, but I could see in his eyes that he was wanting to kiss me as much as I did him. But in full view of the gossiping villagers, we had no choice but to wait.

An hour later, after he had arranged for his room and baggage, we were driving along the country road beside each other. How much we had to say after our long separation! It had seemed years to both of us, and now we were more ardent than ever. Under a thick grove of pines he held me in his arms and swore he would never let me go. I drew away from him gently.

"Tell me, Jerry, why don't mother and father approve of you?" I asked. "What have they against you, dear?"

He frowned. "A man makes enemies if he's worth anything at all, Doris. I have my share, and people circulate lies. Promise to trust me, Doris, and nothing else matters. Tell me you'll never believe what they say!"

I was carried away by my love for him, and I promised; I would not press him for further details. It was enough that he said they were lies. If my parents preferred to believe the slanders, I could only wait until time had proved their error.

I did not permit Jerry to drive me back to Cliff Haven, for I did not want it to become known at the house that he was in the village. But I promised to be with him every day as long as I could. I was glad now I had spent much time wandering by myself, for my long absences would not attract attention. It would be difficult for me to get away in the evenings to be with Jerry, but occasionally I would find a way. I went to bed tingling with the recollection of his arms about me and his sweet words in my ear.

My dreams were troubled that night. I seemed to have wandered right up to the point of the crag overlooking the sea, and I was struggling frantically to keep from falling. Queer shadows kept beckoning me on, and I had the horrible sensation of one who is dropping through space. Long past midnight I awoke with a start.

A low agitated murmur filled my ears, and I recognized the growl of Smoky in the courtyard. I listened with every nerve on edge, for I was still quivering from the memory of my dream. Now and then the growl would become a thin whine. I feared to go to the window to look out; the sky was overcast and the darkness was intense. From my bed I peered at the open window.

Was it some fancy still lingering from my dream, or was there actually something white and ghost-like floating past the window? My hand went to my throat to choke back a cry. I stared at the dark patch of sky outside with a fear that clutched at my heart. My eyes, which terror had given a power that was not natural, sought to penetrate the gloom.

THE voice of Smoky rose up now in a guttural, unearthly snarl. I thought a shadow paused before the window, and when it seemed suddenly to gather a form that was almost human I went frantic with fear. Throwing myself from the bed I tried to scream, but all I could utter was a choking sob that caught

"I Didn't Know the Boss Was Watching Me"

"A LITTLE while ago I decided that I was going to make something of myself, so I enrolled with the International Correspondence Schools.

"The men in the shop knew I was taking the course because I used to study during the lunch hour when I had a little spare time.

"But I didn't dream the Boss had heard about it until one day he called me into his office.

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in my throat. Whatever it was outside seemed to hang upon the sill; it was trying to come in; then my senses left me as my fists drummed madly on the floor.

I awoke bathed in perspiration and lying near the bed where I had fallen. A draught was blowing furiously through the window, flapping the curtains noisily about. The moon had sifted through the clouds and its light was streaming into the room. Everything was silent, and Smoky had ceased his howling.

I crept to the window and closed and locked it; then feeling more secure I lit the lamp on the table beside my bed. For a long time I sat there, alternately shivering and burning up with fever, wondering what had been the cause of it all. I could find no rational solution, except that it had been a dream. When I fell asleep at last the clock downstairs was striking two.

Morning, with its glittering sunshine, found me half ill with exhaustion and terror.

I was not to meet Jerry until afternoon, so I persuaded Aunt Betsy to join me in a walk up the cliff. Neither of us were talkative, and half way to the top she stopped, saying that the climb tired her. She had made far more strenuous trips with me in other directions, but I knew she did not want to go near the spot where Muriel had cast herself away. The sharp walk had invigorated me and I wished to continue, so, bidding her wait for me, I kept on up the trail.

Soon I was on the rocky eminence where that other girl, years before, had come with her lover. I threw myself wearily upon a grassy patch beneath a clump of firs close to the jagged crest. Little islands of blue sky were visible through the leaves, and lulled by the moving branches I closed my eyes. Soon I would be with Jerry, listening to his words of love. His arms would be about me and his cheek close to mine. He would ask me to marry him soon. And I, the happiest girl in the world, would throw my arms about him and say——

I sprang up with a start, my body in a tremble and my eyes blinking in the dazzling light of the sun. I could have sworn I heard a voice whisper "Don't!" It was as if someone had leaned over me gently and breathed the word into my ear. Out of intense and utter silence it had come to check the word that had been on my own lips.

Yet, as I looked around in dread anxiety, I could see no living thing that could have spoken. I was alone. The sifting of the breeze through the swaying branches was the only sound. Not a human soul was in sight or hearing. Had I dreamed again? Had my mind been wandering? Or was I living indeed in a phantom world?

I STOLE away with an awful fear that made my breathing come in gasps. I fought back the impulse to cry, for if I once gave way to this thing I knew I would go mad. There was no one I could tell, for it was all so bound up with Jerry that I could say nothing without betraying the fact that he was here. When I saw him that afternoon I would tell him everything; he would know what to do.

Aunt Betsy had grown tired and had preceded me to the house. I was glad, for in my present state I did not wish to be observed. I went directly to my room to pull myself together before luncheon was served. But at the threshold I stopped in wild dismay. The sight that met my eyes made me grow cold with terror, and it was only by supreme effort that I stifled the cry that rose to my lips.

On the floor of my room, staring at me as if with a fateful warning, were fragments of Jerry's letter, that I had thrown into the waste basket. There they lay, spread out as if they had been roughly assembled in the form of a cross. Who—or what—had made that warning cross upon my bedroom floor?

Was it any wonder that panic seized me? I dropped to my knees in an agony of fear. Who had taken these bits of paper from the basket and spread them out as if to mock me?

There was a rustling under the bed, and had I not been facing it, I know I should have died at that unearthly sound. It was Smoky, crawling out from his place of concealment. Never have I welcomed any living thing as I did that dog! A moment before the world had been spinning around in my disordered imagination; now it became real again with the appearance of that shaggy but genuine animal. Smoky could be no ghost! I threw my arms around him, whimpering with joy, and half strangling him to assure myself of his reality. But Smoky was in no mood for play. He growled continually, and at last broke away. As he passed the bits of paper he sniffed and bristled up as if he scented danger. Then he slunk out of the room, his head hanging and his tail between his legs.

But I didn't care how he acted. He had brought me a rational explanation to calm my mind in some degree. It had been Smoky, of course, who had upset my basket, and in playing with the bits of paper they had by chance fallen into the pattern that had made me quake with fear. I gathered up the pieces, and this time I took them to the kitchen where I flung them into the fire. That one ghastly omen, at least, would haunt me no more.

I HAD little appetite for lunch and, after making only a pretense at eating, I started off on the long walk to Bassett. I found Jerry waiting for me, but my nerves were in a quiver, and no sooner had we left the village behind than I burst into tears. I had had no relief yet for my pent-up emotions, and now I sobbed wildly, clutching at Jerry frantically as he drew the car up in the shadow of a thick grove. Wondering what had happened, he soothed me tenderly, but it was a long time before I could talk. Then I told him what I had gone through, and he gathered me in his arms and spoke reassuringly.

"You've got to get away from there at once, Doris," he said. "It must have been hell for you these past weeks. Is it any wonder you're seeing things? I'll take you away at once, dear. You'll come, won't you?"

There was no doubt as to my answer; I clung to him as to the only one I held dear.

"Take me, Jerry! I'll go anywhere with you!" I answered.

His embrace tightened, and when I had regained my composure, I bent over to whisper in his ear.

"When will we be married, Jerry?"

I thought he frowned, and a cloud seemed to settle over his features. But then he was smiling at me again.

"As soon as we can arrange it, darling, perhaps in a day or two. The main thing is to get you away from here, before you go to pieces. You realize that, dear?"

I could not help but trust him, and in fact I had no clear idea of what the future might bring. When we were married it would be time enough to look further. So we planned for our elopement.

"I'll come for you tonight," he said. "You can bear it till then, can't you?"

I kissed him. "I have nothing to be afraid of now," I answered, "but I'm so anxious to be with you!"

We laid our plans carefully. Jerry would drive his car up the road as far as it was safe, and I would come to meet him. Then we would be off, and the next afternoon we would be in Bangor. Jerry had friends there who would put us up, and we would be married before anyone knew of our whereabouts.

I returned to Cliff Haven at sundown more like myself than I had been since coming to this desolate spot. The nervous fears that had haunted me for the past few days would go once I was with Jerry, and that was to be oh, so soon! I went into the house singing, only to be met with a suspicious look from Aunt Betsy and a scowl from Adam Hopper. That night I played cribbage till nine-thirty with Aunt Betsy; it was the only game she knew, and my mind was so far away from it that she had no difficulty in winning. When I went to my room, the excitement of the day was beginning to tell, and I was exhausted.

I placed my important belongings in a small suitcase that I could easily carry with me. I dressed myself fully so as to be ready when the time came, and then lay down under the covers in case my aunt should take a notion to look into my room. I fought off the sleep that came in spite of me, for my terrible experiences had left me sadly in need of rest.

BUT the hour came at last when I was to go. Cautiously I made my way from my bedroom and down the hall. The old boards creaked and every moment I thought I would be discovered. But there was no sign of life in the old house, and I got up to the front door safely. I knew the catch, and in another moment I was out on the veranda. I paused to be sure that everything was safe before I ventured out among the trees.

Quickly I slipped down the path and had almost reached the gate when a shadow loomed up in front of me. My heart jumped, until I saw it was only Smoky. Sullen and brooding, he was prowling about in the night, and as I passed him he gave a low growl. A few more steps and I was in the open road.

I hurried down the hillside with a great load lifted from me, now that I

was actually away from that dreaded house. In the dark my footing was not sure, and my feet ached and smarted with many bruises from the jagged rocks. But I laughed at the pain, for every step was taking me nearer to my lover. Once or twice I had to rest, but eagerly I went on until at last I reached the fork in the road where Jerry was to meet me. He stepped out as I stumbled up, and in a moment we were in each other's arms. I wept for joy, and he petted me gently and dried my tears.

"All ready?" he whispered. "I've got the car hidden in that copse yonder; I didn't want to be seen in case there were any passers-by."

He led me behind a clump of trees and we got in.

"You'd better do the driving, Doris, for a while," he said. "You know this road and it's rather bad in the dark."

I climbed behind the wheel, and just as I put my foot on the throttle I heard the faint sound of the clock in the village tolling twelve. At the same moment a chill passed over me; something unaccountable and weird, such as I had felt several times before in the past few days. But this time I had nothing to fear. Grasping the wheel firmly, I started down the cliff.

The road had many turns and I drove cautiously, for it was the first time I had taken a car over it. I have driven over worse roads and have never been nervous, but tonight every bump and lurch of the car and every sound of a twig cracking under the wheels gave me a start. And now as I approached the really dangerous part, where the road wound down a steep declivity, I felt a premonition that turned my hands on the wheel to ice.

I felt that something was near me,—something not of this world. I tried to speak to Jerry but my voice caught in my throat. A sudden lurch that I could not avoid threw him against the door, leaving a space between us. And into this space from behind me there came a shadowy figure, a wraith, that chilled me to the core. What kept me from screaming out I do not know. I didn't fully see the thing, for my eyes were glued to the road lest I plunge the car down the rugged cliff. But I knew it was there; I could feel it wedged against my side, and its breath was cold and clammy on my cheek. I set my jaw and controlled my fear. I dared not lose my hold on the car.

Suddenly I felt a phantom hand upon the wheel—and still I could not tell what the presence meant. My arms were paralyzed. I could not fight it off! In desperation I made a supreme effort to use my strength; my foot pressed down on the accelerator, and with a bound the car leaped forward at racing speed. I heard a cry from Jerry; I tried to answer, but it was futile. Quicker and quicker flew the car, with that terrible ghostly hand at the wheel steering—God knows where. It seemed to lean forward suddenly; it tugged at the wheel, tore it from my grasp. There was a sickening lurch, and then we crashed through a thin fringe of trees and down, down the jagged side of the cliff.

MY story is nearly over. When or where I recovered consciousness I do not know, for my brain seemed to corrode, and for weeks I tossed in raving fever. They thought my mind was lost, but gradually things became real again and I could recognize the faces about me. Mother, Father, Aunt Betsy, too—they came in and out of the room, looking wan and worried, for the shadow of death must have hovered very close.

In time I learned the end of that wild midnight ride. Both Jerry and I had been thrown from the car as it tumbled down the cliff, and a farmer, awakened by the crash, had found us and summoned help. Jerry had been seriously injured, but I had escaped with few outward hurts. The injury to me was in the mind. It may have been that I was delirious at the hour I started out from Cliff Haven. Or it may have been that —is it possible, is it thinkable that perhaps Muriel—her ghost or shade—full of her own experience, had sought to shield me from a similar fate?

I only know that when I learned the truth about Jerome Benton I was grateful for the accident on the cliff. He had the blood of his father in his veins, for it was indeed his father who had so wronged Muriel long ago. My parents and Aunt Betsy had recognized the name, and so, without telling me anything about him or Aunt Betsy's history, they had forbade my going with him. But that was not all. After the accident, when Jerry was lying senseless in a hospital, his wife came to him—the woman he had deserted for the wild life he preferred, but who had remained staunch to him and had come in his hour of need.

I shudder to think what would have been my fate. He made no excuse, no explanation, ever; he simply disappeared from my life. It all seems like a bad dream; and yet when I pray—for I have learned to pray—I always call down a blessing for that poor unfortunate Aunt Muriel whom I never knew, and yet who once may have tried in some unknown way to reach me and to warn me.

I have been thankful for that sheltering shadow ever since.

The Soul in the Shady Elm

(*Continued from page 21*)

Somehow, in contrasting the insignificance of the wooden structure with the stark grandeur of the tree, I got the impression of a slave at the foot of the master.

A vague restlessness now seized me. A power, indefinable, was drawing me to that elm. Even as I tried to persuade myself it was a mere curiosity to explore, a sudden fancy to interview a possible tenant of the shack, that suggested a descent into the valley, I was nevertheless aware of a sudden loss of will power. Indefinite anxiety weighed heavily and inexplicably in my mind. I felt cold and miserable.

I BEGAN to descend. Loose earth slid over my shoes as I stumbled down that path. Every step I made increased my previous depression. Strive as I would to escape it, the feeling never left me. Sometimes I halted, and endeavored to summon sufficient courage to turn back, but it was of no use. A mysterious urge sent me on again. Nor did this urge abate until I reached the tree.

In a dejected state of mind I gloomily studied its gnarled trunk and branches. All my past sorrows and regrets commenced to besiege me. The sight of its moist limbs agitated my lachrymatory organs, but, with a forced laugh at my foolish fancies, I managed to fight back a strong inclination to weep.

I turned my attention to the shack.

In appearance it was the most dilapidated looking affair I had ever seen. Of ancient age, and portraying bad workmanship, it was rapidly approaching the last stages of decay. Damp, unwholesome, and uninviting, its outward aspect was not such as would encourage the exploration of its interior. But I was eager to get away from the morbid influence of the elm, so leaving its dark shadows, I walked to the entrance of the shack and stepped inside, for the door was ajar.

The room I entered was small and dirty. The silent interior was filled with a miscellaneous collection of junk. A couch lay near a rusty stove. A woodman's axe occupied a corner. Cans, bottles, and rubbish littered the floor. The walls were covered with strips of wallpaper of floral design, to which dampness had given the likeness of a hideous skin disease. Leaves, woven into peculiarly shaped wreaths, were hung around upon nails; this seemed curious and unaccountable, except on the theory of a child's handiwork.

I now noticed that the abode was subdivided by a partition running through the center. This meant another room. A tightly closed door aroused my inquisitiveness. The light was fading fast. I tried the latch, and to my surprise, I found it opened readily.

With a thrill of horror I paused upon the threshold. An apparition confronted my startled gaze. The figure of a man was standing stock still within the shadows. A sense of utter helplessness prevented me from crying aloud and I stood rooted to the spot, looking at him in sheer amazement. I felt myself being subjected to a close and searching scrutiny. A full minute seemed to elapse, but he never moved.

MY tongue quivered in my mouth, vainly striving for articulation. "Speak," I finally managed to say in a croaking voice, making an effort to break the intense silence.

He took a quiet step forward into the waning light from the doorway. He now stood revealed as a thick-set being of the hunter type. Rough, coarse clothes closely fitted a powerful frame. A huge head was set upon massive shoulders. His face was remarkable, square-jawed and handsome. Altogether, he presented to the eye a superb specimen of rugged manhood.

But it was his eyes that gave me such alarm, for beneath his thick bushy eyebrows, these orbs shone with a most unnatural glare. Red-rimmed, they seemed to burn with the unquenchable fire of a soul-corroding remorse.

My brain felt as though scorched by white hot flames, for with his stare was communicated to me all the pangs and tortures of a smitten conscience. Again I experienced an overwhelming desire for tears.

He scanned my features earnestly—yearningly. Then he spoke.

"I thought you were Marion."

A feeling of intense relief supplanted my previous melancholy fear. The spell was broken. There was nothing to be afraid of. He had merely mistaken me for someone he was, apparently, expecting.

Marion! A woman's name.

What could bring a woman to this God-forsaken shack, I wondered. I suspected a mystery in which I was soon to be involved: and the thought was disquieting.

"You are a stranger around here?" he asked in an absent sort of tone.

"Well, I need company. God knows its lonely enough here!" And he sighed deeply.

With an air of utmost weariness he flung his stalwart form upon a wooden bed by the wall. He resembled a prisoner in a cell as he lay there, shrouded in darkness.

The fact that further conversation seemed to him unnecessary, tended to alleviate my mental suffering for the moment. I mumbled an excuse, and quit his company for the less disturbing quiet of the outer room.

Here I rested, after striking a match and lighting a small piece of candle that I found upon a box. I reclined upon the couch and strove to marshal my chaotic thoughts. They darted through my brain like minnows playing in a brook.

This shack! What was I doing here? Of course, I was going back to the inn. Yes! Right away! The thoughts recurred again and again—yet I was powerless to make a move.

A sense of incapacity and feebleness had stolen over me. My brain was benumbed. I stagnated in a miasma of misery and doubt: was tossed and bewildered in a sea of conflicting emotions. Countless wrongs that I had done in the past surged in upon me: remorse tugged at my palpitating heart. I would have broken down in sheer despair had I not been over-ruled by that dominating emotion—Fear.

Yes! Fear held me in its awful grip. Fear of that remorse-stricken individual behind that partition. There were secrets in his eyes. I dared not guess what.

The blackness of night had descended outside. I shivered as I looked through the doorway. For a brief spell I underwent a reversion of feeling. I even arose and went as far as the door. But as I stared into the black void, an irrepressible tremor pervaded my frame, for there, facing the means of egress, stood the malignant elm, a silent and evil sentinel over me and my companion.

What malevolent propensities did it possess? How could I ever regain enough boldness to pass it? One step within its sinister circle, and my pent-up sorrows would gush forth like geysers.

I dared not leave—I dared not stay.

Then a sound occurred which changed tortures of indecision to final and fearful resignation. The latch clicked and in glided my acquaintance of the secret face.

I saw him as in a mist. His voice reached me as from a thousand miles distance. Spellbound and palpitating, I listened.

"MARION! She was a child of nature, although she was a woman over thirty when I met her. When I say a child of nature, I mean it. She belonged to the woods and flowers. I did not know much of her past. There were rumors—I never cared. I loved her, but she never really returned my affection.

"I met her one day roaming in the woods. She was a sweet and healthy creature, and as wild as the nature all around her. I wooed her in my rough fashion but she never seemed to respond. Her soul was wrapped up in the verdure. In a queer way she made love to the grass, trees, violets. There was an uncanny aspect about her at all times. I never understood her, but I grew to be jealous of the leaves and flowers she handled with such loving care and tenderness."

He paused to contemplate the leafy works of simple art upon the walls. The voice, at first so soft and dreamy, suddenly altered, as he resumed, in tones pregnant with guile!

"I was enamored of her physical strength and determined to win her, so I resorted to cunning. In praising her rather plain but charming face, I compared it with the things she loved most. Thus, her skin possessed the bronze glow of sunset; her eyes were as twin violets; her brown hair a garland of the dried wild grass——

"To further the notion I pretended an interest in nature that I did not really feel. Queer and uncouth though my clumsy flatteries appeared to be, they had the desired effect. She suddenly swept me into her arms, and the intensity of her love almost frightened me. However, we were married in the village later on.

"Then she insisted upon living in this shack. The valley held some unreasonable fascination for her. Well, I grudgingly consented to a honeymoon in this desolate hole, to please the whim of an unusual woman.

"But our happiness was short lived." I shrank perceptibly as his voice became harsh and grating.

"This worship of nature got on my nerves. Even the very stones! One day I upbraided her, and in doing so, unwittingly abused some of her favorite flowers. From that on, her manner toward me changed. She hated me, and swore she would return to nature. I never understood her, as I've said before. I never dreamed of evil portent in her apparently meaningless words."

With what abject fear and sense of impending horror did I breathlessly await the climax of his story. His intonation, now awe-stricken, chilled my blood.

"One evening I found her outside. She was embracing the trunk of that hypnotic old elm—why? 'Are you insane?' I cried. 'What means this foolishness?'

"When I attempted to remove her arms, she fell upon me like a fiend. Her curses were terrible. I fought her off. Presently a deadly calm came over her. She looked awful in the moonlight. In vain did I implore her to return indoors. She merely turned from me and resumed her clasp upon the tree.

"Only once did she favor me with a glance, and such a look of inexorable hatred was contained in it that I left her without further molestation, and went to bed.

"Judge my horror when, upon looking out the window the following morning, I saw her still standing there in the same attitude. My worst fears were realized when I rushed out to look at her. She was dead in the identical position, and wearing the same ghastly look as on the previous evening!

"I buried her there!"

His voice rose to a scream as he exclaimed, "I fear that tree! I believe it possesses her soul!"

THAT night I slept upon a horror-haunted couch. The long threatened storm still withheld its violence, but a wind had risen which shook the shack at sudden and alarming intervals. I found a plenitude of mystery in every sound, yet in spite of my highly excited condition I was aware, to my dismay, that nature was asserting itself within my tired body. Vainly did I endeavor to fight off insidious sleep. The rigidity of my frame, caused by a sense of impending disaster, finally surrendered to unconquerable weariness.

Into my uneasy slumber stole phantoms of inconceivable shapes. All wore a look of unutterable gloom—the accumulation of centuries of grief. In their shadowy forms I perceived a something of weird and monstrous peculiarity—half human—half tree.

Presently they danced a wild orgy, entwining arms and whirling in a circle. The ring became smaller and smaller. The human elements merged into the fauna, leaving a spinning mass of branches to my amazed and horrified mind. Suddenly the gyrations ceased, and there remained the image of the elm which grew outside the shack.

Growing horizontally from its trunk was a grotesquely fashioned limb, strikingly resembling a human arm with hand outstretched. The wiry twigs at the end looked like fingers widespread, as though in readiness for something to grip. And as I watched it, in mesmeric trance, the arm began to stretch—and stretch—toward me! I was at once seized with an awful terror, while my body remained in a state of suspended animation.

The hideous limb reached through the air toward the windows of my room,

and the wiry fingers began to scratch at the dirty glass. As if in obedience to an undeniable summons, the catch fell open and in crept the hand. The sweat froze to my forehead in manifestation of my horror-bound sensation. My heart thumped with appalling loudness. Over my fear-distorted face hovered the dread fingers. Their whip-like talons grazed my flesh.

With a shriek I awoke, bathed in perspiration, and trembling in every fibre of my being.

It was gone!

As if in answer to my cry, there arose a dull sobbing sound. My face was chalky—my mouth hung open. It was then—just then—that my grip upon my mental faculties relaxed. I was now beside myself with fright. I leaped from the couch and hammered at the door which concealed my partner.

"Stop that noise!" I screamed, "or I'll murder you."

The wailing noise continued. Goaded to frenzy I beat a wild tattoo upon the wood, then tugged furiously at the latch. The door was locked!

"You devil!" I exclaimed. "I can't stand it. Stop in the name of God!"

Then a dreadful fact became manifest to me. The moans I was hearing did not proceed from within the chamber. No! They came from somewhere out in that dark void. Merciful Heaven! The tree!

A CRESCENDO of wild sobs could now be distinguished above the fret of the rising wind. I found myself grinning in maniacal glee. Where was that axe? Ah!

Snatching it up with savage eagerness, I rushed into the night.

The impetuous fury of a gust nearly swept me off my feet, but I fought my way to the objective. With great vicious blows I hacked at the malevolent tree. What ghastly sounds were those that issued from its bruised trunk? I exerted my utmost strength in wild swings. Ha! I would put an end to all this grief. Come storm—come wind, I would not swerve from my purpose. The cursed elm should die. I glared up exultantly at its thrashing branches, then burst into wild, discordant laughter.

Suddenly an icy chill shot through my shoulder. A human hand had been laid upon it. The uplifted axe remained poised in mid-air. Exerting my will in a mighty effort, I forced myself to look around. It was the odious inmate of the shack! His burning, grief-laden eyes, unimploring yet filled with unspeakable misery, pierced me through and through.

Quickly I thrust his hand aside—and then—we were locked in each other's hold. A life and death struggle. How strong I was—yet he was stronger. Ah! If only I could get free to use my weapon. But it had slipped from my grasp during the conflict. To my awful consternation I noticed his eye upon it as he lay across my prostrate form. Freeing a hand I caught the axe and threw it a few feet away. He released his giant's grip and jumped up to gain its possession.

A terrific blast of wind—a vivid flash of lightning—and crack went the tree. With all its annihilating weight the elm fell, crushing my opponent's body beneath.

Through supernatural glare, shocked with tumultuous roar, stung by a million drops of hissing rain, I fled that valley of horrific memory.

He Had to Pay the Nine-Tailed Cat

(*Continued from page 38*)

but meet me also; for I am not disposed to conceal myself, though you may think so. Still, why should this trouble you or break your rest? For, if you have a clear conscience, you surely need fear nothing from

THE DETECTIVE.

FOR days afterward Walton's friends observed that he was moody and absent-minded, but none of them could guess the reason. As for the captain, he felt that however he might try to convince himself that the mysterious footsteps were a mere illusion, there could be no doubt about the genuineness of the equally mysterious letters. Gradually, much against his will, he began to connect the affair with certain happenings in his own life which he had earnestly hoped to forget, but which now came back to his memory with terrible distinctness.

For there was a dark chapter in the past life of Guilford Walton, ex-captain of the high seas. There was a shadow of death death by cruelty—which sometimes came between him and the fair form of his fiancée. It was a chapter Captain Walton had thought forever closed, but —

Ten years before coming to New York, Captain Walton, while lying in an English port—the town in which his boatswain kept his family—formed a secret attachment to the boatswain's daughter. Learning of her disgrace, the father turned the girl out of his home with reproaches and curses, and within a few months she died of a broken heart.

On the voyage following the girl's dismissal from home, her father, presuming upon Walton's implication in her guilt, behaved insolently toward his captain. Walton degraded him from office. He retaliated on the father for his cruelty to the girl, and subjected him to the terrible severities which were, in those days, within the power of a sea-captain.

The unfortunate wretch made his escape at the West Indies, and died soon afterwards of wounds received from the cat-o'-nine-tails on board ship. Walton, it was learned later, had seen the man

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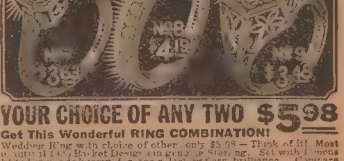

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die; on a later voyage he had seen the lonely grave beneath the palm trees. And he had turned away, proud, implacable, with that strange, sinister expression on his face.

And now—could a ghost be following him?

In an effort to throw off the gloomy thoughts which filled his mind both day and night, he interested himself in trying to recover, largely through the influence of Aaron Burr, the land which really belonged to Anna Barrington's mother. It had been confiscated and sold at the time of the Revolution. Anna Barrington was now her mother's sole heir.

The excitement growing out of this claim really did bring about a very decided temporary change in Captain Walton's mind and actions. Miss Barrington, especially, noticed and rejoiced over his altered appearance.

It was not long, however, before Walton again was thrown into a state of consternation by renewals of the old annoyance—which by this time he had come to look upon as a pursuing horror from which, apparently, there was no escape.

WITH some friends, including a boy of sixteen, who later wrote a record of most of these events, Walton had attended a public meeting held in Martling's Tavern, which afterward became old Tammany Hall. Leaving this building, they walked down Frankfort Street to Pearl. Walton, it is recorded, "seemed taciturn and absent-minded, and so different from his usual conversational mood that one might imagine that some deep anxiety was praying on his heart."

Yes, Walton was silent, strange, for he had heard the now familiar footsteps "dogging" him all the way home.

They had reached Franklin Square, and the captain was about to cross the street to reach Walton House, when a stranger appeared before them. He was short and of surly appearance; he was wearing a cap, and had the look of a sea-faring man.

They had seen him coming when he was perhaps forty feet away. He was a strange looking creature; he did not seem quite human as he came along. He was walking rapidly and muttering to himself; he glared savagely from beneath frowning eyebrows. He marched straight on until he was directly in front of the captain; then, halting abruptly, he gazed up into his face for a moment "with a look that seemed almost diabolical with fury and revenge," according to the recorder. He then turned sharply away and disappeared into an alley.

Walton's companions all felt that they had seldom seen so fierce and menacing a countenance, but they hardly felt that it was sufficient to carry terror to the heart of a brave man. Well knowing the captain's reputation for courage, they were astounded to see him reel backward and hear him give a cry of horror. Then he seemed to recover himself quickly, and started off in pursuit of the strange man. In a moment or two he returned, in evident confusion, and sat down upon a doorstep, his face ghastly and haggard.

Believing that the stranger might have struck the captain, his friends made inquiry. He merely shook his head confusedly and asked:

"What did he say? I did not hear it clearly. Did you make it out? I know he said something."

The others had caught nothing, and were inclined to believe that Walton was mistaken about the man's having spoken at all. The captain made some excuse about hard work in connection with the Barrington claim, late hours at political meetings, and so on, and presently parted from his friends and entered his house.

A day or two later, Walton, distracted, miserable, had called in Doctor Hosack, who was then considered New York's cleverest physician. He refused absolutely to listen to his patient's explanations of overwork and ordinary nerve-strain. He declared that there was something on his patient's mind, and Walton presently indicated that he had guessed aright. Then he somewhat astonished the doctor by asking him if a dead person might, by any means then known to medicine, be restored to life.

Upon being assured by the physician that the signs of death were usually unmistakable, Walton seemed satisfied on that score. But he asked if it were not possible to procure a warrant for the apprehension of one who might be proved to be a lunatic.

The Doctor, answering that this might be done, but that it was a matter for the law rather than for medicine to take care of, at once realized that it was the mind, rather than the body of his patient, which was suffering. Only a day or two later Doctor Hosack noticed this advertisement in the *Commercial Advertiser*, and at once connected it with his strange interview with Walton:

> If Godfrey Burton, formerly boatswain on board the ship *Petrel*, will apply to Edward King, 14 Wall Street, he will hear something to his advantage. Should he prefer to come after dark, he may call up-stairs on the family at any time up to 11 o'clock.

The physician felt that his patient's distress must in some way be connected with the person named in the advertisement, since the *Petrel* was the vessel Captain Walton had sailed; but no information as to the real purpose of the advertisement was ever divulged by the attorney.

Walton had always been a notably temperate man; but at a grand supper of the Masonic fraternity, held shortly after the events just recorded, he drank heavily. Apparently heartened by the liquor he had consumed, he afterward visited the Barrington house, passed a pleasant evening, and was returning home by way of Duane Street. Suddenly the report of a musket rang out behind him and a bullet whistled past his head. His first impulse was to turn and start in pursuit of the would-be assassin. As quickly, however, he decided to go on; and he had just reached Broadway when suddenly he caught sight of the man in the cap ahead of him. The man walked rapidly toward the captain, who made no effort to hinder his progress. As the strange figure passed him, he distinctly heard deep-muttered threats of vengeance.

IT was the Reverend John M. Mason, of the Cedar Street Church, who, a few days after this event, prevailed upon Walton to seek a change of air and a complete rest. Walton, taking Doctor Mason into his confidence, except for the secret which he had so long guarded—assured the clergyman that he was pursued by a demon, that not even God could help him, and that he had, in fact, lost even his ability to pray for divine aid.

Within another month Walton was declaring that he heard accusing voices at all hours of the day and night. He frequently encountered the mysterious stranger, whom he never seemed willing to molest. He was induced by his prospective father-in-law to go on a sea voyage to Halifax, his departure being kept a secret from all but Miss Barrington.

Ten days later they landed in Halifax, and were walking up the street leading from the quay. Mr. Barrington was a few paces in advance. Suddenly Walton ran ahead, his sinister face looking over his shoulder, his eyes strained and wild. Barrington saw no one behind Walton, but—he heard footfalls, the sound of running feet. It was evident that Walton could see what Barrington could not. His voice was raised in a piercing, terrified cry.

"I see him! I see him! He touched my arm—spoke to me—pointed to me. God be merciful to me! There is no escape! He is after me now!"

They returned to New York by the next packet, Walton quite convinced that it was useless longer to try to cheat the fate to which he felt himself doomed. It was plain to Miss Barrington and her father that the girl's marriage to Captain Walton was out of the question; but this did not prevent Anna Barrington from doing all in her power to aid and comfort her lover in his hour of complete physical and mental collapse.

Walton had declared that one of the first faces he saw, upon returning to New York, was that of his implacable enemy. Whether this were true or not, it occurred to Mr. Barrington that Walton would be far better off if he were kept in perfect quiet in some rural neighborhood—a secret retreat where his presence would not be known even to his friends. Mr. Barrington picked out a large country house near Kip's Bay, where a family and a special medical attendant should have charge of him.

TO guard against actual invasion, Walton was persuaded to confine himself strictly to the house and garden, which had a high fence whose gates were kept locked.

Both Mr. Barrington and his daughter took up their residence in the house. A few cheerful and carefully chosen friends were invited to visit it and help to brighten the captain's confinement.

And then—a kitchen-maid, who knew absolutely nothing of the reason for Captain Walton's being in the house, nor even that he was not supposed to view anything happening beyond its

walls, was sent to the garden to gather some herbs. She ran back in a state of great alarm, her task but half finished. She said that while gathering some thyme and rosemary in the farthest corner of the garden, singing while she worked, she had been interrupted by a coarse laugh. Looking up, she had found herself face to face with a strange and fierce-looking man, small of stature, wearing a cap. She declared that she had been utterly unable to move so long as the man had kept his eyes fixed upon her. He ordered her to carry a message to Captain Walton, to the effect that he must come abroad as usual, or else expect a visit in his own room.

Having delivered this message to the frightened maid, the stranger immediately disappeared. Mrs. Anderson, the housekeeper, upon hearing the girl's story, commanded her very strictly to say nothing to Captain Walton of what she had seen or heard. At the same time she ordered some workmen, who were repairing the front of the house, to search through the neighboring fields. They returned at last without having seen anyone; and with many misgivings the housekeeper communicated the fact to the Barringtons, who united in the plan of keeping it a secret.

But a few days later, Walton, who had sufficiently recovered in health and spirits to enjoy rambling about the grounds, was strolling by himself at the lower end of the yard when suddenly he found himself face to face with his mysterious tormenter.

FOR a moment or two he stood rooted to the spot, his blood seeming to turn to ice in his veins. Then he fell to the ground, insensible. There he was found a few minutes afterward, and was carried to his room—the room which he was never afterward to leave alive.

From this time a marked change was observed in his mental condition. He was no longer the excited, terror-haunted man he had been for so long, no longer oppressed with extreme despair. In a talk with Mr. Barrington, he quietly asserted that he was assured his sufferings would soon be over.

"Nonsense, my dear fellow," answered the old gentleman. "Peace and cheerfulness are all that you need to make you what you formerly were."

"No, no! I can never be that," replied Walton, mournfully. "I am no longer fit to live. I am soon to die; but I do not shrink from death as once I did. I am to see him but once again, and then all will be ended."

"He said so, then?" Mr. Barrington asked in astonishment.

"He? No, no! Good news like this would never come from him. I have other sources of knowledge, and of comfort!"

"But cannot you see that this whole affair is, as the doctor suggests, partly a series of dreams, or of waking fancies, coupled with the appearance, every so often, of some cunning rascal who, for some reason, owes you a grudge?"

"A grudge, indeed, he does owe me," answered Walton. "When the justice of Heaven permits the Evil One to carry out a scheme of vengeance—when its execution is committed to the lost victim of sin who owes his ruin to the very man he is commissioned to pursue—then, indeed, the torments of hell are let loose on earth. But, though death now is welcome, I shrink, with an agony you cannot understand, from the last encounter with this demon. I am to see him once more, but under circumstances unutterally more terrible than ever!" Then he muttered something Barrington did not understand—something about a nine-tailed cat.

Walton now insisted that the window blinds be kept closed. His body-servant slept in the same chamber, and was not out of it day or night. The physician was dismissed, since his services seemed to help the unhappy man not at all. The servant was considered perfectly capable

FOR opinions on the *July* issue of GHOST STORIES, in the Cash for Opinions offer, awards went to:

MISS MARY EDISON,
of St. Helena, Oregon

MR. F. P. PITZER,
of Jersey City, New Jersey

MR. DAVID WATSON,
of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

THE three awards will go to some one for opinions on this issue. Why should not one of them go to you?

of waiting upon the captain and keeping an eye on that part of the house. Walton insisted upon the presence of this young man—when others were not with him—at all times. Total solitude was the one thing which he seemed to fear above everything else. Thus, a self-made prisoner in this one apartment, he awaited the end, which he declared was not far distant.

The climax of this remarkable drama came about two o'clock on a winter's night. Walton was in bed, as he had been for most of the day. A lamp burned constantly; his servant slept on a couch in the corner of the room. The man was roused from his slumber by Walton's voice calling to him:

"Get up, Wilson, and look about. I can't get it out of my head that there is something strange in the room or the passageway. Make a thorough search. Such hateful dreams!"

The servant arose and, lighting a candle, peered into every corner of the room. Finding nothing at all unusual, he opened the door and started to walk down the passage. He had advanced only a few steps when the door of the room, as if moved by a current of air, swung to behind him. The man was not in the least disturbed by this brief separation from his master, as the ventilator over the door was open, and he knew he could hear distinctly any call from within the room.

HE continued to look about the passage, when suddenly he heard Walton's voice calling to him. He did not call loudly in reply, as would have been necessary at that distance, for fear of disturbing the household. He walked quickly back, however, and seemed stricken with a terror that held him paralyzed, just outside the door, as he heard a strange voice in the room, responding to his master's tones.

Still rooted to the spot, the servant presently heard Walton cry out:

"Oh, God! Oh, my God!"

There came a momentary silence, which was broken by a scream of agony, appalling and hideous. Driven by ungovernable horror, the servant tried to open the door, but he was too paralyzed with fear to turn the knob.

As he stood there, cold with dread, yell after yell came from the room beyond, and then rang with terrible echoes through the otherwise silent country house. What was happening in that guarded room? Suddenly released from his thralldom of fear, the man turned and ran aimlessly up and down the passage, until a minute or two later, he encountered Mr. Barrington.

"What is it? Who—where is your master, Wilson?" he asked wildly. "For God's sake, is there anything wrong?"

Then, without waiting for the terrified servant's reply, the old gentleman burst open the door and entered the room, with Wilson at his heels.

"The lamp has been moved from the table," said Wilson. "See! They have put it by the bed."

Ordered by Mr. Barrington to draw the curtains which draped the bed, Wilson drew back in alarm. Mr. Barrington took the candle from his shaking hand and, advancing to the bed, himself drew the curtains apart.

The light fell upon a horrible figure, huddled together and half upright at the head of the bed. It appeared to have slunk back as far as the solid paneling would permit, and the hands were still clutching the bed-clothes.

Calling the captain's name, Mr. Barrington leaned forward and held the candle nearer to the white, drawn face, the eyes of which held a look of unutterable horror. The jaw was fallen; the terror-filled eyes gazed with frightful penetration toward the side of the bed where, a moment before, had hung the drawn curtains.

"Great God, he is dead!" cried Mr. Barrington, as he gazed upon this fearful spectacle.

"Cold, too!" added the servant, touching the dead man's shoulder. "And see, Sir, there was something else on the bed with him! Look there—see that!"

As the man spoke he pointed to a deep impression at the foot of the bed which plainly had been caused by the pressure of something or someone upon which—or whom—the dead man had lately bent his now sightless eyes.

He had met his Nemesis: the strange follower who had dogged him for so long, at last had been avenged for a wrong committed years before. So ends the strange story of Captain Walton.

If only he could have realized the full consequences of his cruelty before it was too late!

Child or Demon—Which?

(*Continued from page 26*)

He broke off and, bending over the crib, grasped the child by the arms, staring intently into its face. It stared back at him with leering impudence.

"Go back," said Martinus quietly. "This is not your time. Go to sleep now."

Gradually, as I watched, I saw a film seem to pass over the eyes. The look of intense hate that Bobby still directed toward his mother was succeeded by one of mere fatigue. Slowly the eyes closed. Martinus made a few passes over the face. Little Bobby slept.

Mrs. Adrian came forward. "What is it?" she whispered. "What is this evil spirit that seems to possess him? Is it—is it *her?*"

"That we shall find out in due course," answered Martinus. "With your permission, I shall bring another assistant here with me at an early date—Mrs. Sampson, a materializing medium who——"

"You mean that faker who was exposed by the New York newspapers?" asked Adrian hotly. "I won't have her in my house. I'd rather—I'd rather have things go on as they are than have any such exhibitions here. My child is sacred to me. I don't believe in such nonsense, anyway. Besides, if there is any occult world, we are not supposed to tamper with it."

"I can guarantee that Mrs. Sampson is no faker, as you term her, but a most respectable woman," answered Martinus. "However, just as you say."

Mrs. Adrian drew her husband aside and seemed to be pleading with him in low tones. Reluctantly he turned toward Martinus.

"Well, bring her along," he said. "Of course, you understand, if any harm comes of this——"

"No, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Adrian vehemently. "Do help us, Doctor. My husband is so distracted he doesn't know what he is saying."

"BUT that is too horrible for words!" I said to Martinus later. "You mean that the old legends of vampires are true? . . . But the Adrian child cannot get out of its crib!" I exclaimed, as if I had penetrated his defenses.

"My dear Branscombe, you misunderstand the theory upon which that legend, as you call it, was built. The vampire never drew its sustenance from its victim in living form. On the contrary, it was invariably found at home in bed."

"You mean it materializes a phantom to perform its horrible work? But how can a phantom perform a physical act?"

"If you will look up your Homer," answered Martinus, "you will see that when Ulysses went down into Hades to consult the spirits, he had first to pour blood of oxen into a trench for them to feed on. The blood is the life, as the Bible tells us, and essential to a complete materialization. Even in the séance-room the medium often is forced to submit to a partial disintegration of the physical tissue in order to build up the body of the materializing entity."

"But a child—a baby like that!" I exclaimed.

"Branscombe," said Martinus solemnly, "a baby like that is quite a satisfactory agent for the entity that is making use of it in the fulfillment of its designs. Remember, the child itself is guiltless. And remember what I was saying the other day, that the impulse toward incarnation on the part of the dead who have completed the cycle of discarnate life, or who are attached to earth by any strong emotion—this impulse is so intense that they will make use of anything, even the body of an animal. . . . But here is Mrs. Sampson, coming in at the door."

MRS. SAMPSON was the wife of a small contractor, living in the Bronx. She had two grown daughters, and was, to all appearance, the type of stout, motherly woman who might be expected to live in such circumstances and surroundings. I had seen her before—she was, in fact, the medium whom I had refused to "expose," and on whose account I had severed my connection with my newspaper.

I had seen her perform certain inexplicable phenomena while in a state of trance. Judge my astonishment, therefore, when she began:

"Now, Doctor, you've been very kind to me, and you certainly helped my Margie when the doctors wanted to put her away, and she's engaged to marry a fine gentleman now, and I'll never cease to be grateful to you. And that's why I came. But you know Joe never liked me to take part in them conjuring tricks of yours, and he says there ain't going to be no more of it."

"Come, Mrs. Sampson, you won't turn me down when I need your help so badly," said Martinus, with a wheedling manner that sat so strangely on him I could hardly keep from laughing.

"Where is it this time, Doctor?"

"In Yonkers," he answered. "Just some friends of mine who've got a boy who's a little out of his head. I've promised to help them, and I'm counting on you."

The woman pursed her lips. "You know, Doctor, this gets me in bad with the neighbors, and Margie being engaged now—no, I can't do it. Besides, it takes it all out of me, and I've never found out what you do while I'm asleep. I don't like it, Doctor, making an exhibition of myself before people that way. Besides, supposing the police was to raid the house? They fined a fortune-teller fifty dollars only last week for pretending to tell the future."

"Ah, but I really do tell the future," answered the Doctor. "Let me see your hand."

He took Mrs. Sampson's thick palm in his, examining it intently. "What's this?" he asked. "Money? Why, my dear lady, do you know you're going to be richer than you ever dreamed of being, inside of a year?"

"Why, that must be Uncle Jim!" exclaimed Mrs. Sampson, in agitation. "He said he'd leave me something, but it's years since I seen him, and I guessed he'd sort of forgotten me. Do you really see money in my hand?"

"I see more than that, Mrs. Sampson," responded Martinus gravely. "What's this? Why, Mrs. Sampson, inside of a year you are going to have—no, surely that can't be so—and yet the palm can't lie. I see the cutest little fairy of a child——"

Mrs. Sampson blushed and bridled. "Why, Doctor, don't you see? That's Margie's baby!" she said, all in a flutter.

Martinus released her hand. "True, of course!" he exclaimed. "Why didn't I think of that before? Well, Mrs. Sampson, I'm sorry you can't come, but I guess I can find somebody——"

"Now don't you go so fast," said the woman. "I don't really see how I mightn't be willing to oblige, seeing what you done for Margie, and it being a private house. . . ."

Five minutes later she left, with the understanding that she was to come to us two days later, on the evening arranged for the séance. Martinus was in high good humor when he came back, after closing the door on her.

"You certainly know how to handle women of that type," I suggested.

He smiled, and shrugged his shoulders. "She's always that way at first," he answered. "It gives her an increased sense of her own importance. She hasn't the least conception of what happens while she's in a trance, and doesn't dream she's one of the best materializing mediums in the country."

"Suppose Uncle Jim doesn't leave her that money," I suggested.

"I didn't say it was Uncle Jim," answered the Doctor. "Though, as a matter of fact, she predicted herself, while in trance, that she would receive it, and she seems to have the genuine faculty of prevoyance. But, anyway," and he laughed, "we've helped the cause along."

MARTINUS told me his plans on our way up to Yonkers, Mrs. Sampson, on my other side, absorbed in the *Evening Graphic*.

"We are going to lay a trap, or, rather, bait a trap, for this entity," he said, "exactly as it baits a trap for poor Adrian and his wife when they cross in sleep to the other side, where it has its haunt. You know the proverbial stupidity of the ghost, according to German folk-lore. Whether or not it sees through our motives, it will be unable to resist the lure, simply because of what I have often spoken of—the irresistible impulse toward incarnation.

"In plainer words, we shall endeavor to cause this thing, whatever it is, to leave the child and enter the body of good Mrs. Sampson, because she has the faculty of enabling it to attain the one thing it longs for more than any other—material life."

"Material life?" I echoed.

"Material life—for a few seconds only, but, nevertheless, while it lasts, intensely real and intensely gratifying."

"But do you mean to assert that the materialized spirit actually consists of flesh and blood?" I asked.

"Why not, my dear Branscombe? Nature has provided more than one method of reproduction among the orders—three, at least, corresponding to the three kingdoms; what is there improbable in the suggestion that she can make use of a fourth? And materialization through ectoplasmic secretion is, after all, extremely similar to the reproduction of a tree or plant by budding.

"If you will read Sir William Crookes' account of his investigations in this subject, you will find that the celebrated Katie King appeared to him while he was alone in his study with the medium, Florence Cook, and that she appeared in all respects a woman of flesh and blood. She helped him raise the medium and deposit her more securely upon the couch. He took her pulse, and the medium's, and found them to differ by a number of beats per minute. He clasped her to him, and felt her solid form disappear into nothingness in his arms. All this, my dear Branscombe, is a matter of scientific report, made by one of the foremost physicists of his day, a man whose life work was the investigation of matter."

"But if you succeed in getting it to leave the child and go to Mrs. Sampson, what then?" I asked.

Martinus laughed in his dry way. "We shall try to slam both doors in its face at once, and leave it out in the cold," he answered. "Did you ever take part in an old-fashioned parlor game known as musical chairs? Yes, we ought to have a very interesting time with this phantom, Branscombe."

IN spite of Martinus's matter-of-fact manner, and my own former experiences, I could not repress a thrill of fear when, the preparations having been completed, we took our places in the temporary séance-room into which the Adrians' bedroom had been converted.

It was not the weirdness of the scene, or, rather, the contrast between that weirdness and the prosaic life of Yonkers going on outside—cars following one another down the street, voices of passers-by coming up to us through the shaded windows. It was the presence of the boy as the chief agent in what was being done.

A cabinet had been constructed by means of two cheap screens, fastened together, in an opposite corner of the room; the child's crib was also screened, and in that crib sat the little boy, wide awake, and chuckling over a woolly lamb that he was hugging. Mrs. Sampson sat in the cabinet, of course. Between this and the screened crib we four—the Adrians, Doctor Martinus and myself—formed a half-circle. Outside, the twilight was swiftly fading into night.

As this night deepened in the room, it was uncanny to hear those chuckles coming from the cot.

"He's never been like this before," Mrs. Adrian whispered. "He always goes to sleep before this time. When he's awake he—he isn't like that, not with me in the room."

There was an indescribable pathos in her voice. Adrian muttered uneasily. It was evident to me that he had been dragooned into attending the séance, disbelieved in it, and resented it.

"Let us keep silent," said Martinus. Seated next to the cabinet in which Mrs. Sampson was, he leaned toward her. "Are you ready, Mrs. Sampson?" he asked.

"Ready," she answered in a faint voice.

A few seconds later I heard her sigh and begin breathing heavily.

"This is all nonsense!" muttered Adrian uneasily.

But it was eerie in that room, as the silent minutes passed, and now the child was chuckling no longer. I saw his mother trying to strain her eyes toward him through the darkness.

"Whatever happens," came Martinus' low tones, "please remember to keep silent, and above all do not stir from your places under any pretext."

MINUTES more. A street car rumbled past in the distance. My hands had that peculiar cold numbness that I always felt when something was impending. I was straining my eyes upon the cabinet, from which I heard Mrs. Sampson's uneasy stirrings and moanings. The black stuff curtain that hung in front of it was moving to and fro, but that might have been her hands.

"Oh, my God!" whispered Mrs. Adrian suddenly.

The curtain had partly fallen from one of the hooks that held it in position, affording a dim view of Mrs. Sampson's head and shoulders, barely outlined in the faint light that came from the sides of the window-shades. And about the woman's shoulders some filmy stuff seemed to be condensing.

"Silence!" Martinus whispered insistently.

A few seconds more, and the filmy stuff was clearly visible, as if lit by its own phosphorescence. And it was moving, moving slowly toward the front of the cabinet—a cloud, a faintly luminous cloud, perhaps like that which guided the Children of Israel through the desert. Shapeless, nothing but a cloud, it moved and swirled with innumerable tiny eddies, and behind it I could see the figure of the medium sunk as if in sleep, and I could hear her heavy breathing.

If the cloud was assuming shape, I could not see it. Sometimes I could see nothing, at others patches of mist seemed to float before my eyes. But of a sudden something happened that sent an icy chill down my spine. From the child's crib came a wild, shrill, chuckling laugh.

Never have I heard a human laugh so terrible as that, even from a grown man or woman. And following immediately upon it there came a scream from Mrs. Adrian:

"Oh, my God, Emma!"

What happened next I don't know. A chair was overturned, I heard Martinus land on both feet as if he had leaped from a height; there came an oath from Adrian, the sound of some one panting—then Martinus had switched on the electric light, and I saw Mrs. Adrian lying in a dead faint upon the floor, her hus-

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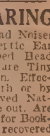

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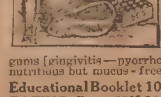

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hand kneeling beside her.

Mrs. Sampson sat slumped in her chair within the cabinet. One of the screens had fallen back against the wall. The child was silent in his crib, and Martinus was breathing heavily, as if he had been running.

"Too late, Branscombe," he whispered huskily. "If she hadn't screamed——"

Adrian looked up, his face twisted with violent anger. "Leave my house, all of you. I'm through with this foolery!" he said.

THREE weeks went by. Doctor Martinus had said very little to me about the failure of his experiment, and of course I had not questioned him. In the face of Adrian's attitude—he had practically turned us out of his house—there was nothing more to be done. I was absorbed in some abstruse work of Martinus' and had virtually dismissed the affair of the Yonkers vampire from my mind.

Then one evening, as we were seated at Martinus' desk together, checking up some data—the subject had reference to the Einstein theory of light—the doorbell rang violently. Next minute the colored maid was showing in Mrs. Adrian.

The three weeks had worked a shocking change in her. There was hardly a vestige of color in her face, which looked like that of a corpse. Her skin was shrunken over the facial bones, her expression wild beyond anything I had seen.

She ran to Martinus and seized him by the hand. "Doctor, this can't go on!" she cried. "We are at our wits end. My husband is on the verge of insanity. He begged me to come to you and ask you to overlook the remarks he made to you at that séance in our house. If he hadn't I should have come to you anyway. We will do anything, literally anything, if only there is a chance that things will right themselves. Doctor, at night I go to the most frightful places. I can't remember what happens there, but—people without pity, Doctor, inhuman things . . . and then our boy. . . ."

Martinus laid his hand on her shoulder. "I know all about it, Mrs. Adrian——"

"And Richard and I go to the same place together. That is the horror of it. For a long time I wouldn't let him know that—that I had dreams like him, but now we know that we both go there. And they are dragging us there. It means insanity, death—and Bobby——"

She broke off, incoherent and frenzied. Martinus made her sit down.

"I thought you would be coming here soon, Mrs. Adrian," he said. "Of course I know your husband was hardly responsible for what he said that night. I believe we can yet find the remedy."

Before she left he had promised to be at the Yonkers house the following evening for another sitting.

THERE was the usual prelude with Mrs. Sampson, who had come out of her trance in time to take some of Adrian's remarks to herself, and to feel accordingly offended; but Martinus soothed her ruffled feelings in his adroit way, and we three started up toward Yonkers as before. On the way the Doctor outlined his scheme to me.

"We're dealing with infinite cunning and determination, Branscombe," he said. "Not in the human way, of course. Judged by any standards at all, the people on the other side fall far short of us humans in intelligence, because they function there through instinct. But there is no doubt that the particular entity we are dealing with does understand in a dim way that we are laying a trap for it, and is resolved to outwit us.

"I told you, Branscombe, of my intention of decoying it out of little Bobby Adrian by the lure of Mrs. Sampson, and then slamming both doors on it. The trouble is that we were not quick enough to stop it. You saw the ectoplasm exude from Mrs. Sampson's body? That was, of course, the veil of the entity that has taken possession of the child, and left him in order to attain materialization through this good lady on your left, who is so busy reading 'Advice to the Lovelorn' in that paper of hers.

"The instant Mrs. Adrian screamed the ectoplasmic exudation returned to Mrs. Sampson, and the entity, relinquishing its sheath, became one with Bobby Adrian again. This time I hope to throw a barrage around it which will effectively bar its way."

"I've heard the old legend of a spirit being unable to step outside a circle of chalk," I said.

"Not without a basis of sense, Branscombe. It is neither the chalk nor the circle, of course, but simply the disintegrating effect of white light, and, chalk being white, it might have something of the same effect.

"However, we have progressed beyond chalk. I have sent a certain apparatus up to the Adrians' house, and I hope that this will do the trick for us."

IT had arrived before we got there, and consisted of a small but complicated apparatus something like a projecting camera. There was a circular slot arrangement too, and lenses, together with some sort of clockwork mechanism that I did not understand. We carried it up to the bedroom, where the child lay asleep in his crib.

But this time I could hardly repress a cry of horror at the sight of him. The whole of that child's body was suffused with scarlet, the lips were carmine as a painted woman's lips, and more dreadful still was the look of smug satisfaction upon the face as the child slept.

I looked from him to Martinus, who had left the apparatus that he was setting up, and had come to my side. Adrian, more ghastly than before, was standing in the doorway. Martinus made a gesture to me, hardly perceptible, indicating he wanted me to say nothing.

But to the mother's eyes nothing was amiss. She bent over the crib, fearful lest the boy should awaken. She looked up at us.

"Doctor, isn't he a strong, beautiful boy!" she said. "I can't believe that anything is really wrong, of the kind you've told us about. Oh, if I could only believe that you can drive this dreadful thing away and let us be as happy as we used to be!"

"I believe I can," answered the Doctor. "Only this time everything will depend upon absolute silence, no matter what you hear or see."

"You shall see that you can trust me this time," Mrs. Adrian responded.

MRS. SAMPSON had taken her place within the cabinet. We four formed the same half-circle, but in front of Doctor Martinus was the apparatus, standing on a tripod, and somewhat resembling a surveyor's theodolite. I wondered what part it was to play in the séance. But I should know soon enough. Already Mrs. Sampson was breathing hard and moaning inside the cabinet. Again I felt that cold wind on my hands. I saw the curtains swaying to and fro.

Then, curling out beyond them, I saw the strands and shreds of mist. But this time they seemed to be taking tangible form. And gradually, very gradually, through the darkness, I saw the outlines of a woman's figure grow against that silhouette of blackness.

Mrs. Adrian's hand in mine grew tense. She was breathing convulsively, almost as hard as the medium inside the cabinet. That shape, that terrible shape, was floating toward the half-circle. Suddenly I saw its face—and I was gripped by an uncanny terror.

"Emma!" shrieked Mrs. Adrian. "Emma!" and fell back, fainting, in her chair.

A face flat as a pasteboard mask, white as a death's head, the eyelids closed as it floated forward, the hands seeming to grope for something. I could not take my eyes off it. Suddenly that peal of wild, horrible laughter was repeated, but this time from the half-formed lips. And with that the eyes opened.

Eyes of blazing black, like pools set in the sockets, pools of blackness against the whiteness of the face. Eyes blazing triumph, scorn, and derision, as they fixed themselves upon Mrs. Adrian.

But she had suddenly grown limp. Her husband, at her side, was rigid in his chair, his head following the floating form with stiff, mechanical jerks. The figure stopped in front of us. And then —I could not tell whether it was the form that spoke or Mrs. Sampson in the cabinet:

"I've got my eyes open!"

"WHY have you come back?" asked Martinus.

"I told her. I've been wandering in the dark. I didn't know where I was, but I've got my eyes open now."

"You've taken the wrong road."

"No, the right road, the right road. I'll make her pay."

Martinus leaned a little forward. "There is no passing by this road. You must take the other road, the road of birth. This road was closed long ago, long ago, Emma Wishart."

"It's too long, that other road, and I shall forget."

"No one ever forgets. Go back. This road is closed to you henceforward. You have been wandering. You have forgotten. Go back now and let the dead bury their dead. That life of yours is ended, the balance is drawn, the account closed. Go back and take that other road."

A shriek of derision came from somewhere in the room. I saw Martinus' hand move, heard a lever click. Suddenly the figure was ringed with a flood of brilliant light, blazing between it and Mrs. Sampson, between it and the child.

The scream that followed sounded like a bedlam of fiends in hell. For one instant longer I saw the figure white against the darker background; then it had vanished. The light had gone out, and I heard the collision of two heavy bodies somewhere in the room. From Adrian's lips came a maniacal gibbering. I heard Martinus panting as he wrestled with some invisible adversary, and, groping, I found the electric light and turned it on.

Mrs. Adrian was sprawled in her chair, unconscious. Her husband was on his feet, mouthing and gibbering. Upon the floor lay Mrs. Sampson, her arms locked convulsively about Martinus' neck, her fingers twitching at his throat.

IT was Martinus' custom to maintain a certain reticence about his cases until some time had elapsed. Consequently, though I was decidedly curious to understand just what had happened, I had to wait his pleasure in this particular instance for nearly a month.

What precipitated the discussion was the appearance one morning of Mrs. Adrian, bringing with her little Bobby, apparently a perfectly normal child of his age, and clinging lovingly to his mother.

"Doctor," she said, "I shall never be able to thank you enough for what you did for us. My husband is well on the way of convalescence now. That terrible night was the end of all those horrors. You saved us both from insanity, and you have given me back my boy."

"A fine-looking little fellow," said Martinus, pinching his cheek. "I needn't tell you to take good care of him, Mrs. Adrian."

"You know, Doctor, my husband and I have been talking over all this, and we have come to the conclusion that we must both have been badly run down, and imagined all sorts of stupid things. I'm not a sceptic, but of course one must use one's common-sense in such matters. There wasn't really a—a spirit in that cabinet, was there?"

"Well, not the conventional ghost—no, Madam," answered Martinus. "But Mrs. Sampson, my medium, is really adept——"

"Oh, you needn't go on," said Mrs. Adrian. "I knew it was she who came out of the cabinet, but still, I believe there is a lot of quite unconscious imposture. Anyway, I shall never criticize you because you saved my child."

When she was gone, Martinus turned to me with a smile of cynical amusement.

"You see, my dear Branscombe? What chance has one of turning one's scientific discoveries to account, when the world is full of just such people as Mrs. Adrian?"

"Doctor," I answered, "you have never told me just what did occur. I imagine it was her husband's finding you at grips with Mrs. Sampson on the floor of the séance-room that brought about this change of attitude on Mrs. Adrian's part."

MARTINUS nodded thoughtfully. "This identification of the medium with the form is the great stumbling-block to the lay mind," he said. "But you know, Branscombe, that since the form is built up out of the very tissues of the medium, both are identical. Thus, when one grasps the form, the medium is instantly projected from the cabinet into the very hands of the scoffer who has seized it, and of course, incidentally, his cry of fraud appears entirely self-evident.

"In this case, by instantly encircling the materialized shape with a band of light containing the ultra-violet rays, which are immediately destructive of ectoplasmic tissue, I threw an impassable barrier between the shade of Emma Wishart and both Mrs. Sampson and the child. We slammed both doors, my dear Branscombe, leaving the vengeful spirit out in the cold, with no prospect of working out its revenge save by passing through the legitimate channels of rebirth. And by the time she is able to accomplish this, you and I and Bobby Adrian will have long since been mouldering in the dust.

"I want you to understand, Branscombe," he went on, "that Emma Wishart is, or was, by no means consciously a devil. It was the impulse of the death-bed curse that carried her along. She was not consciously a vampire, nor did she wilfully prey upon her sister and her sister's husband through the medium of the child. All those doings were as unconscious as the doings of the newly dead man who, in his eagerness to inform his family that he is still alive, knocks down pictures and ornaments, flings lumps of coal, and generally raises cain with his antics, under the impression that he is merely signalling his presence in a decorous way. Given a wish, nature sets her own mechanism to work to fulfil it—and she generally sees that the wish is fulfilled.

"It was the intense desire to reassume material form that brought about the whole chain of circumstances. With Bobby Adrian's soul firmly in the saddle again, and ruling his healthy little body, I don't think there is much likelihood that his aunt will ever succeed in imposing herself upon him again."

"I wish the Adrians could understand," I remarked. "It seems, somehow, as if they ought to take a more intelligent interest in matters which concern them so intimately. It is pitiful that you should have to work in the dark, so to speak, when dealing with matters of such transcending importance."

"Yes," and Martinus nodded, "but if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, they would not hear one though he rose from the dead."

Guided By a Phantom Hound

(*Continued from page* 20)

and the thunder seemed to roll around the earth and back again. A wall of rain beat in fury against the long French windows. In one shadowy corner the hour hand of a grandfather's clock pointed to one.

Suddenly I said:

"God, it's a night for ghosts all right!"

Dave tried to argue me out of my mood, but I interrupted him. I was nervous, distraught.

"You just don't understand, Dave," I broke in. "In every man's life there are hidden things. There are in mine."

A tremendous burst of thunder rolled over the sound and suddenly out of the silence of that vast house a fearful scream rang, a scream terrible in its intensity, its appeal! Never have I heard another such agonizing sound.

David bounded to the door and threw it open. I was at his heels when he sprang into the reception hall.

There on the stairs in her nightrobe, clinging to the balustrade, was Bella Green. Her short, curly hair was standing up all over her head; her eyes were wide and staring.

"Good God, what's the matter, Bella?" asked David, running up the stairs.

Close behind my friend, I spoke—gave voice to my only thought: "Where's Dorothy?"

It seemed at first that the girl couldn't speak. Then she swayed forward into David's arms.

"My God, oh, dear God, she's gone!" she exclaimed. "Find her! She isn't in her room. God, do something!"

LEAVING the girl in David's arms, I took the rest of the stairs three at a time, and met Hurlburt Thorne and the two pale Thorne women grouped in the corridor.

David and I set our shoulders to Dorothy's door and broke it open. It was empty of any human occupant. The bed clothes were thrown back, but Dorothy was not there, nor indeed was anything that was hers.

Consternation grew in our hearts as we searched the house and its environs in vain.

The storm had ceased, save for an occasional fitful gleam of lightning in the sky.

Dorothy had disappeared, and had left no trace behind her.

DAVID called me at that moment, and shaken with bitter grief, I went out to my friend.

He insisted we go back to Silver Mine. There was no use in remaining in Greenwich any longer. If Dorothy returned,

she'd naturally come to me at Silver Mine, he urged. Hurlburt would bring Bella home as soon as she was able to get up—she was ill in bed with shock.

Hire private detectives? Yes, certainly! The best idea, but what was the use of running wild like an animal escaped from the Zoo? I must act like a man, not a kid. So we went home.

David found Dorothy's note among my other unopened letters. And here it is:

DEAR ROBERT:—

Forgive the trick I played on you. You're dramatic enough to realize what excellent copy it'll make. I was getting as stale in my work as last year's bread. Dear boy, forget all about me. I'm not worthy of a nice fellow like you. I'm going away for awhile. When you see me again, I'll be married, and I hope you'll find some girl deserving of you, Bobbie. Give my apologies to David and Roland and Bella and the Thornes if you see them. Always remember me as your devoted friend,

DOROTHY SEVERANCE.

With the letter in my hand, I stood as rigid as a rooted elm, staring at David. He took the note from my hand and read it and threw it on the table.

"Sit down, Bob," he said curtly.

Which I did, simply because I could no longer stand. My head was spinning around like a top.

"Internal way to get copy," he muttered as he proffered me a stiff drink of brandy.

I gulped it down thankfully.

THEY were awful hours I put in, in spite of David's company until ten. I had the insistent feeling that somehow I'd hear from Dorothy. I couldn't believe she was capable of hurting me so cruelly. I bored David almost to extinction by repeating my conviction.

He had been gone an hour perhaps, when I suddenly realized that someone was in my room, an invisible someone—a faint, intangible presence it was.

I saw no one! Yet I felt I was not alone. Horrible! As I paced the floor in agony of mind, another paced with me—back and forth, up and down.

Rattlepate suffered with me, poor brute. He was as sensitive as a violin string. He howled miserably, and I let him howl for I was madly endeavoring to bring to vision my pacing companion. I was possessed with a mixture of desires for my girl and terror to be rid of the invisible feet that tirelessly trod at my side.

I believed that I was losing my reason. I'd always been absurd in my fear that sometime I'd visualize a dead face. Would it be to-night?

Words cannot express my relief when at midnight David ran in. He begged me to go home with him.

"No, I can't leave," I returned. "Dorothy might come, you know." Then I laughed wildly. "Anyway, someone has been here ever since you left, Dave."

"Who?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"How do I know when I couldn't see it?" I said, hoarsely. "I haven't taken a step, that it didn't take a step too. God, up and down, up and down! Rattlepate, poor dog, has been through purgatory. Perhaps if I had his sight——"

Here David broke in upon me.

"Let's tear up and go away a spell, boy," he said. "I need a change. So do you. We'll tour and sketch. Bob, you're off your nut. You come on over to my place now."

But nothing he could say, no argument he advanced made any impression upon me. At length he went sadly away.

No sooner had he taken his departure than I realized that I was alone with my dog friend crouched close to my feet. I was free for the first time in hours from my ghostly visitant. The unseen thing had gone.

I dropped into a chair in front of the window and stared out upon the dark, uneven skyline, and wept in my appalling solitude.

All of a sudden I found myself slumped down upon my bed. How I got there, I do not recall. Rattlepate, whining, was pressing his nose against my hand. After all, a human body can bear so much and no more.

I could not sleep. As if I were dead, all save my mind, I lay with my face toward the window. The clock on the mantel above my large fireplace struck two. Off in the village a bell in a church steeple tolled the same hour—two, long, vibrating strokes.

The world about me was buried in sleep; I heard only the ticking of the clock and a groan from Rattlepate now and then as he dozed. Bursts of breeze shook my curtains. Strange that I could lie so mentally and physically still, succeeding such a hectic period of pain, but I did!

After a spell I became conscious of pale filaments of sapphire blue light filtering into the room through the window. I wonder I was not amazed at so unusual a sight. Bands of bluish beauty directed themselves in and through the room, like rays from a great moon-like gem hung between heaven and earth.

I WATCHED them, unafraid, quiet and nerveless. Strip after strip glided in as evenly cut as the color bands of a rainbow. They mingled and broadened together until the room was radiant, a softly shining square of blue.

Then, to my utter astonishment and horror, I saw a slender white hand appear from beneath the window. It rose slowly upward, first the pale, colorless fingertips; then the soft, unwrinkled palm; then the wrist! And there it paused, an unmoving, spectral hand, through which I saw the translucent threads of blue weave in and out.

Then a long-drawn-out sigh sounded but a few inches from my face! I have a half memory of uttering a shriek.

Rattlepate lifted his head, growled and bristled. Then he whined and crawled under my cot-bed.

Who had sighed? I raised on my elbow and stared at my pillow. Nothing, save ribbons of azure in countless numbers did I see passing over it, only to climb the wall and spread over the ceiling.

My eyes flashed back to the window. The spectral hand moved upward. A slender arm appeared. Then a figure floated into my studio and the misty ribbons cleared away.

I crouched, stiff with terror. There, approaching, was the faceless wraith of the mystery room. The same long, slender lines, the proudly reared head, a stateliness of person seldom seen on earth! And then I saw a face, exquisitely beautiful, take shape under a crown of glittering hair. A pair of dark-lashed eyes stared unwinkingly at me.

I realized that the blight I had feared all these past years had fallen upon me. I withered into an old man. My great and final hour had come. My death was at hand. Good God, I could not die! Dorothy! I must know my love was safe. I tried to pray. I endeavored to plead with God to give me an opportunity to live for a while. Just one glimpse of Dorothy first——

Inch by inch the shadowy woman was advancing. Large and somber and melancholy were her sea-green eyes. Her mouth, winsome, wistful, was the mouth of a child. The whiteness of her skin was alabaster. Her hair was lighter, but it waved like mine.

I stared at her. She had come to take me away. Her arms were extended as though she were enticing a baby into their shelter.

It was no ordinary fear that clutched at my heart and shriveled it. There are phenomena and emotions so far beyond ordinary human experience that there are no words adequate to express their meaning.

I tried to speak, but my tongue was frozen.

Shall I ever lose the memory of her bending over me, her great eyes burning with the green of the sea?

"Why—here, woman?" I managed finally to whisper.

She sighed the same sort of a sigh I'd heard near my pillow.

"Come with me!" she said, with a majestic wave of her hand toward the doorway.

Go with her—where and why? I would not, and wildly I told her so.

"I will not!" I screamed. "No! No! Never!"

She touched me. The specter touched me! I think it was then that my hair began to whiten. Oh, frightful fingers of ice on a man's burning face!

I screamed, "Dorothy!" I cried out for David.

IT was well that my studio building was far removed from other abodes! Else, I imagine, my friends would have burst in and carried me struggling to a mad house.

Then the shapely, unearthly hand moved to my mouth, and two fingers tapped my lips.

I tried to cry out again, but my voice was stilled. I wept piteously, like a child. Ah, the loneliness of my approaching death was a fitting sequel to the loneliness of my boyhood!

Then—a horrifying spectacle—the lovely specter wept with me. As God lives, I realized she detested her task.

With all my might and main I struggled to a sitting position and struck at her hand. My own mad fingers went through it, and it remained on my face!

And then there arose at her side, as if magic had thrust him up through the

floor, a spotted yellow hound, a creature of another world.

A long, low howl came from Rattlepate under my bed.

"Come with us!" said the spectral woman.

She had said "us." That meant the powerful ghost dog had come to aid her in her mission.

I was impelled to obey, even to death. I was fully dressed in my day clothes. Even as my feet struck the floor, and I heard the bang of my heels on the bare boards, the woman's fingers slipped over my chin and down my neck, leaving an icy trail I feel to this day.

Then she drifted backward six steps; we faced each other, and the ghostly hound sat, stiff and silent at her side.

"Come! Follow me," said the spirit.

"I want to see Dorothy first," I whispered. "Be kind. She did love me! She does love me. Let me see Dorothy once before I die!" I covered my face to shut out the horrid sight of the two of them—the mystical and transparent hound, cowing me with his gaze, and the woman, tall and dreadful in her unearthly beauty of face and slim loveliness. Hound and woman were here to usher me into everlasting damnation!

It suddenly occurred to me that if I could get to David Lolock, he would help me. I must get out into the open some way. I edged toward the door, my eyes never leaving my silent companions. I was almost there, a few steps, a little mist to overpass, and then I'd be away from the green-eyed woman and the spotted hound. I put my hand on the door-knob. I tore the door open. God, I was out under the sky!

I'll never call myself a coward for starting that sprinting run toward Lolock's. When I discovered the wraith woman was on my right and the specter hound on my left, I shuddered to a standstill.

"On!" whispered the woman softly, and on we went.

I pounded madly on Lolock's door. I called his name, begged loudly for him to come out, but the dark studio might have been a tomb. David was either not at home or so sound asleep that nothing but the crack of doom could awaken him.

Who else then? Ah! Roland Hurlburt! His place was but a quarter of a mile beyond.

When I turned swiftly, I saw the woman, side by side with the hound.

Then off again I bounded, panting for breath, dodging the trees and tangled wood vines. Looking down, I saw the yellow hound beside me, loping as stealthily as a mountain leopard lopes. She of the ethereal beauty floated like a cloud through the gloom of the forest, and raced on. I rushed into the motor road leading to Hurlburt's studio with long, bounding strides.

AS I approached the building, I opened my mouth to call his name. Then the woman's hand, a frail, dead thing, pressed over my lips. And even as I write, I shudder. It fairly made my white hair stand on end this instant, the memory of those frozen fingers.

A faint glimmer of light shone from around the drawn shades of Roland's studio. The rest of the place was dark. Hurlburt was there—he was still awake, thank heaven!

Up a short flight of steps we went, the woman gliding, the yellow hound stalking stiffly with that unearthly pitter-patter of his softly padded feet, and I plastered between them.

Save for the bluish brightness which still clung around the woman and the ghastly glint of the hound's hide, all about us was gloom.

The woman opened the door wide, and we entered the low-beamed hall, the three of us.

Under the studio door a light streamed out like a thin, golden blade. Roland was behind that door. I was about to plunge at it when the woman extended her white arm, and despite my efforts to avoid her, she forced me back. As cold as were her fingers, colder were mine. I seemed to be dying by inches. Move I could not.

We were facing the studio door, and from behind it I heard a sound, a wailing sound; then a voice, Hurlburt's voice.

"I've been more than patient with you, Dorothy," he said. "Why, you act like a spoiled baby! Do show some sense! I've offered you all I possess. We'll start abroad tomorrow. You can live anywhere you will in the world if you'll only marry me."

"But I don't want to marry you!" was the sobbing answer. "If I can't marry Bobbie, I don't want to marry anyone. I'll never forgive you—you and that dreadful butler for carrying me off. And the way you made me write that letter when I didn't want to at all! It's all disgraceful—wicked! It's all just nearly scared me to death, Roland."

"I know it, my pet——" began Roland.

"Don't call me your 'pet!' I'm not," exclaimed Dorothy. "Now I'm not anybody's pet. Have you seen Bobbie?"

"Yes, and he read and digested your letter," was the reply, and then he went on pleading with my girl for himself. I was shocked at the blackguard he made me out to be. I was already married! I had a host of enemies, among whom was my father! "I can only repeat, dear, that I had to save you from a rascal," he asserted. "I've given you proof enough that Bob Swift would be murdered if you——"

"Oh, don't repeat it, don't!" and my own girl wept. "Oh, my Bobbie, I love him so! God knows I want to save him from harm—from death——"

The next thing I knew the three of us, my ghostly companions and I, were in the studio.

HURLBURT afterwards said that I bounded into his room alone, mad with fury. But I know that the woman glided in first, and then I entered, the yellow hound slinking after me.

And there was Dorothy, pale and troubled, crouched in a chair, and Hurlburt standing with his back to the grate in which flickered a few flames.

He says that I flung myself upon him and got him by the throat. Dorothy couldn't tell, because at the sight of me she fainted. But this is what happened:

The hound, glistening with phosphorescent light, leaped forward and buried his fangs in Hurlburt's neck. What a sight! As much as I hated the man, I'd have helped him then, if I'd been able.

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But the wraith woman's hand gripped me, and I could not. I saw the dog grow stiff with rage.

"Don't hit me again, Bob!" he said whining. "My hands are up. I thought she'd be better with me. I swear I did, and I love her! Don't—don't kill me! Dorothy, for God's sake, get up and help me!"

Dorothy was a mere crumpled heap in her chair.

"Swift," cried the man, "get away! Let me go! You're killing me! I'm dying! I'm dying, I tell you! Get me a doctor, get me a doctor—quick!"

At this juncture Hurlburt claims I cried out in rage and knocked him down again. I'll admit he was bruised and bleeding afterwards, but I do not believe I rowdied him.

I have no further recollections. When next I remember anything, my hair was as white as it is now.

But what matters hair? Dorothy and I are married. The ceremony was performed while I was still in bed, and my beloved nursed me back to health.

I shall never believe what they say—that I pummeled Hurlburt to my own collapse.

My father, informed of my serious condition, came to Connecticut to see me. He seemed to be a changed man. My stepmother died several months later, and in his grief he asked me to come home; and Dorothy and I went to him immediately.

One day he summoned me to him.

"Forgive me, Bob, for all my stupid, unconscionable actions to you," he said. "I was a fool—a fanatical idiot. I treated your mother just the same. She had a beautiful dog she loved. I didn't approve of idolizing animals. I had it killed and never would let you have one. Your mother was an angel on earth! God forgive me! Because she couldn't think as I did, I sent her away! My boy, I want you to take this key and go to her room. There you'll find a painting of her. It's yours!"

Respecting his agony, I left him, the key in my hand.

As I entered the mystery room again, I felt that reverent awe—the sense I was on holy ground.

THE room had been dusted recently. Outside of that it seemed exactly the same as on that night when my wraith woman had stood in the corner by the window. Still the crêpe covered one huge space of wall.

A weakness overtook me. Behind that stretch of black was the image of my mother. I recall repeating with trembling lips, "an angel on earth!"

Unshed tears partially blinded me as I removed the dead, dark drapery. It fell in a heap at my feet.

Then I looked—looked and grew dizzy. Proud head on a delicate, girlish neck; clouds of soft hair, waving over a beautiful forehead; sea-green eyes; a form in misty white like foam! One hand clasped a dark red rose. The other rested on the pate of a well-built yellow hound!

The wraith woman who had saved my reason, my love, my very life, was—my own mother!

What Is the Secret of Rubini the Great?

(*Continued from page 23*)

Finally we determined that Mrs. Houdini should hide a match box, and should will that, after finding the match box, Rubini would return it to its original resting place.

The match box was hidden behind an object on the top of a cabinet.

Upon his return, Rubini adopted a most unusual tactic.

"At the start of my experiments I do maintain a kind of contact," he explained. "A little later this evening I shall do away with it altogether. For the present I shall need it. But it is a very little contact."

FROM the breast pocket of his coat he removed his watch and a thin, long, glittering chain of gold. He put the watch into the palm of Mrs. Houdini.

"Hold that against your heart," he requested earnestly.

Loosely in his hand he held the other end of the chain. At no time was this chain pulled taut. Always it hung limp and glittering, the only physical link between this man and this woman—could it be possible that through so slender a tie he could obtain the secret within her brain?

We watched, fascinated.

For a while Rubini's movements were haphazard, uncertain—he was making the same familiar false starts that are inevitably a part of the ancient mystification of muscle reading. Then he led Mrs. Houdini across the floor, directly to the tobacco stand from which the box of matches had been removed.

Here there was a long pause.

After four or five minutes, Rubini turned to Mrs. Houdini and said:

"You are not telling me mentally what to do!"

Mrs. Houdini then admitted that she had been thinking of the place from which she had taken the match-box.

A few moments later, Rubini turned and led her back, half-way down the room, until he was directly beside the cabinet where the matches were hidden. In another moment his groping hand had found them. Still, apparently, in a condition of light trance a condition which he had claimed for himself in his opening address—he wended his way back to the tobacco stand and replaced the matches in their original position.

Certainly this was an amazing demonstration, even to one familiar with the old muscle reading principle. What signals, what secret and uncontrolled communications, could come across that dangling gold chain?

"You're next," said Houdini, addressing me.

I said that I did not wish Rubini to find a hidden article. Instead I wished to will him to do some certain action which I would devise in my own mind, and which I would not divulge to any other person until the close of the test. The only stipulation to which I acquiesced was that I would write down what I wanted him to do—and I took good care that no one saw the words. I wrote it in an isolated part of the room, where no one possibly could see what I wrote, with my own paper and pencil.

In passing let me say that the possibility of confederacy could be eliminated, for everyone present was an enthusiastic student of mysteries, enjoying the demonstration purely from the standpoint of entertainment.

What I wrote on the card was:

"Approach the bust of Houdini and make a military salute."

Now the way Rubini obeyed that request was truly astonishing. He blundered very little. I do not think it required more than five minutes for him to perform the test. Once he stopped and asked me a question; then he seemed in doubt. But again he persisted. All the while, in front of Houdini's bust, was a large table. This was in his way. He slapped the top of the table with his open hand. He struck its leg with his knee. He shook his head over it in puzzled bewilderment.

Finally he came to a determination; he let the golden chain fall from his hand while he pulled the table aside and went over to the bust of Houdini. There he made an awkward movement with his left hand against the side of his head. As a military salute, it probably would send a recruit to the guard-house, but Rubini had done enough to make me feel that he had succeeded in his undertaking.

His next test—done with Houdini's secretary—was much more rapid. Perhaps the girl was not so much mentally on guard as I. The test was that Rubini was to take a pillow from the divan, put it under the feet of Doctor Wilson, and then put her friend on the pillow.

ALL this was accomplished with very little hesitation; I think it occupied less than three minutes. As the affair was purely a social one, I made no notes of time, or of other details that would be important in a formal rendering of the circumstances.

The final test was the really extraordinary one.

Using, at my request, the same young woman as his subject, Rubini did do his trick without physical contact of any kind.

When he left the room I suggested the following test:

Please note the separate operations involved.

I bid a toothpick by inserting it, lengthwise, down the center of a cigar-

ette. Then I hid the cigarette.

The test which I proposed was:

One: Rubini must locate the concealed cigarette.

Two: From the cigarette he must extract the toothpick.

Three: He must replace the toothpick in the cigarette.

Four: He must break the toothpick and the cigarette.

When Rubini returned to the room, the above test having been arranged, he asked the young woman who was used as his subject, to put her clenched hands against her breast.

He stood perhaps a foot and a half distant from her.

There was now no gold chain, no little link by which his muscles might possibly be united with his subject.

For a moment he stood looking at her.

Then he turned and walked directly to the piano, on the top of which, concealed behind a picture, the cigarette had been hidden.

He picked up the cigarette, and without a moment's hesitation he withdrew the toothpick.

Only for a few moments he hesitated. Then he replaced the toothpick in the cigarette, and broke the two between his fingers.

How did Rubini do it?

Rubini did not tell me, and therefore if I were to say that I know how he accomplished his trick, I would not be telling the truth.

A CONSIDERABLE experience in magic and acquaintance with magicians and their methods has convinced me that this is a trick; but to disclose even a theory regarding it, would, I feel, be an injustice to Mr. Rubini, who is, to my way of thinking, first of all, an artist.

I watched his performance, not with the eye of an investigator, but with the same kind of relish with which I listened to De Pachmann when he played Chopin. But you need have no doubts as to the nature of this performance.

Mr. Rubini is too much of an honest man to make supernatural claims for his astounding ability. He merely presents it as a clever illusion. Like Houdini, he is a materialist, apparently presenting the impossible.

He smiles, naively, like a child, and says, in his curious accent:

"It is experimental psychology."

When I said good night to Doctor Wilson, Mr. Ransom, and the others, and went to the door with Houdini, those ghosts, with which my imagination always peoples the hallways of that mysterious house, seemed to be staring at me, whispering.

Cagliostro, especially, seemed to be there; the great and lovable charlatan of the Diamond Necklace affair before the French Revolution, seemed to look at me with his haunted eyes, as if to say:

"If Rubini had been with me in Paris when I turned the baser metals into gold for the Cardinal de Rohan, I would have made him the prophet of the Revolution."

And indeed, in another generation, Rubini, and his host Houdini—in fact, the entire company gathered in that room—might have been burned for witchcraft.

As I walked toward Central Park my thoughts were full of these things, and it did seem to me that the wonders of the human mind, whether offered as a trick or as a miracle, continue to be wonderful, no matter by what name they may be called.

Out of the Storm-Swept Night

(*Continued from page* 13)

came face to face with her husband standing on the threshold of the open door . . . rain pouring from the lowered brim of his hat and over his shoulders. She ran to him with an exclamation of surprise and joy, pushing the door shut.

Her husband, his coat collar turned up, was smiling down at her, and she, forgetting the storm, was asking:

"Why did you come back so soon? How did you come into town at this time? I thought you were in Denver tonight. Oh, I am so glad you came home!"

All solicitude, she tried to take his coat, but he seemed reluctant to let her perform the task, and was making his way into the library, saying:

"I came home with a friend. I wanted to see you tonight. Let us sit by the fire, dear. Glad you are happy to see me."

HE sat in his chair by the fireside. She hovered near him looking into his face.

"Why, dear, take off your hat and coat. You are so wet!" But he shook his head.

"No, honey girl. I am somewhat cold. I would rather sit here like this for a while. How are the children?"

"They are fine. Asleep. They will be so glad when they know you came home to surprise us. But, dear, you are pale . . . you are so very pale! Are you ill?"

She drew near him and tried to reach his hand, but he thrust them in his pockets. She touched his cheek caressingly with her fingers, withdrawing them quickly.

"Why are you so cold? . . . so cold! I will make you some coffee, a hot drink. Ah, to come home in this storm! You are chilled." She started to go into the kitchen, but he motioned her to sit down.

"No, don't bother. I am all right. Sit here by me. Let us talk . . . talk of the little ones."

She sat beside him, a moved look on her face. "Talk of the little ones?" Strange! Why did he want to talk about the little ones and sit there in his wet overcoat with that hat pulled over his face? An inexplicable feeling of weariness came over her.

"Yes, dear," he was saying, "let us talk of our little ones." She bent forward looking fixedly at him. He was staring with averted face into the fire. He seemed almost a stranger to her sitting there with his hat on.

"Our little ones," he was saying. "Why, Denny will be fourteen soon. How time passes! And Dorothy eleven. Denny should be an engineer; he should go to college; he will make good! It will be pretty hard at first, but he will make it." He paused. Mrs. Bradford asked slowly, in a far away voice:

"Denny an engineer? Why, you always said you wanted him to be a doctor!"

There was alarm in her voice. Oh, why didn't that wind stop howling? Why didn't those pines stop striking against the walls?

"No, dear, not a doctor! He should,

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he must be an engineer." Her husband was talking a little hurriedly now—in jerks. "Doris should have an educational course. She will become a fine teacher. And you, well . . . some day, you will be their guardian. Invest wisely, especially those Grayson bonds. They should be changed as soon as possible and invested in the first issue of the C. and I. stock. That is safe."

HOWLING, howling of the wind! If it only would cease! Why did her husband talk like this in that strange low voice? She laughed a bit nervously, and said, chokingly:

"Please, dear, don't talk like that! You sound as though you were making a will." The word sent a chill along her spine. A will? Why, yes, it did sound as if her husband was making a will. His voice continued, calmly ignoring her remark.

"The C. and I. bonds are the safest. If some day, if some time you should be called upon to look after finances, it would be advisable to invest all. . . . do you understand? . . . all . . . in that, even insurance money. This would provide an assured income. Taking different issues, they would mature at intervals. You have the home; you have your pocket money; the bonds would take care of the education of Denny and Doris . . . then . . . then . . ."

The assembled wedding guests were a out; the front door banged open; the fire on the hearth heaved into sparks, glowed at the puff of wind, then leaped into flames. Mrs. Bradford glanced at her husband's chair—he was gone!

The lights came on. She remained staring, her face tense, staring at that empty chair beside her. Where had he gone? Where was he?

She glanced about the room. No one! She rose from the chair; walked to the hall. It was deserted. She opened the door, her hands trembling strangely, and looked into the night. The wind was subsiding, moaning in the west. The pines bent their tops almost to the porch steps, like tired warriors after a battle. The thunder rumbled in the distance.

The rain was a drizzle now. The air was strangely still. She remained on the threshold staring into the night, then with an ashen face she slowly closed the door. She went to the fireplace, walking automatically on tiptoes as if in a trance, numbness paralyzing her faculties. She was trying to reason, trying to think, yet fearing to think.

Again she looked about the room, her eyes strangely dilated, searching for what she knew was not there. Her husband was gone . . . gone the way he had come . . . out of the night—and into the night!

Then a strange realization seemed to enter her consciousness. The hat—the coat—his not looking at her—staring at the fire—pale—cold—cold—cold!

With a scream Mrs. Bradford fell across the empty chair. . . .

The telegram came from Denver the next morning. Bradford had met death in a railroad wreck the previous night at eleven. He had returned for a last visit home, before he went away —forever.

Married After Death

(*Continued from page* 31)

proceeded rapidly. No expense was to be spared, and from the testimony of those who witnessed the affair, it partook of the nature of a fashionable home wedding. The supernatural was emphasized when the words of the marriage service were pronounced by the medium to the spirit bride and spirit groom, invisible, of course, to anyone but the medium. Then there came a weird, moaning sound, causing the flesh of the skeptics to creep and cold chills to quiver along their spines. Some of those present described it as the whirr of wings, as if a heavenly host had passed through the apartment, while to others it sounded like the dying chant of a celestial choir.

WHATEVER the sound may have been, coming as it did at the moment when Mrs. Stryker pronounced the words which made the spirits one, it lent a most unearthly touch to the affair. The tension was heightened when the gas jets flickered, the lights almost went out, and a chill wind swept through the rooms. Later, among some who were present, there were those who were unkind enough to intimate that the medium had arranged these effects to intensify the illusion, but whether she had or not was never revealed. The scene was an intensely dramatic one and the many present rubbed their eyes in bewilderment, uncertain whether they were living in a spirit world of unreality, or if they were still on this side of the grave and citizens of the prosaic city of New York. The ceremony took place in the front parlor of the apartment, which occupied the entire floor of one of the brown stone fronts, in a section of the city which was still considered fashionable.

The apartment had been decked with roses, and costly blooms made the air heavy with perfume. In the centre of the room was Mrs. Stryker, dressed in white silk. Never had she looked more entrancing. She was undeniably handsome and possessed the secret of that unanalyzable power of attraction with which some mortals are endowed. A diamond brooch sparkled on her low cut gown. This costly bauble was a gift of the bridegroom's father.

The assembled wedding guests were a queerly assorted lot. Among the sprinkling of business and personal friends of the groom's father there were many men and women, who were said to be Spiritualists and were the friends of the medium. They seemed to accept the wedding of the spirit couple as the most natural thing in the world, although they were forced to admit they had never before attended a spirit union solemnized amid earthly surroundings.

Seated a short distance from Mrs. Stryker, was Mr. Carroll, senior, who represented in the flesh the bridegroom, while near him, essaying the role of bride, sat Mrs. Stryker's mild and complacent husband, a small man who obeyed his wife implicitly. Everyone looked solemn and not even a semblance of a smile betrayed the thoughts of those of the guests who did not believe in spirit manifestations, and who had attended the funeral of the bridegroom a year previously.

Concealed in a bower of palms, was an orchestra which played the wedding march. Such was the power of suggestion, that many of those present closed their eyes and saw, or thought they saw, the bride, leaning on the arm of a white-haired father and accompanied by her bridesmaids bearing huge bouquets. According to reports, she advanced down the room to meet the groom before the officiating high priestess, and there Clifton Carroll, dead one year, was wedded to the lovely spirit, Bright Star.

To think that in the heart of the most modern city of the Western world, in a material age, where men no longer discussed how many angels could stand on the shank of a pin, but took their coffee and rolls with a profound belief in the commonplace facts of existence, such a wedding could be solemnized and attended by people well known in the social and business life of the metropolis, is sufficient commentary to the fact that man is eager to experience the unreal.

SOON after the wedding Mr. and Mrs. Stryker moved to 251 West 23rd Street, and it was here that the writer of this article first came in contact with the medium.

Years before the events recorded, Carroll had done work for my grandfather, Frank Leslie, then one of America's best known publishers. He also knew my father, Alfred Leslie, a magazine publisher, and suggested to him that he rent a floor in the house, which he did. My father and mother occupied the front rooms and my brother Frank and I had the rear.

Although I was just a school-boy at the time, I shall never forget the thrill I experienced one winter's evening, shortly before dinner. I had just entered the house, and as I was going up the stairs Mrs. Stryker called to me to come into her room. This was before the days of electricity and the gas jets in her room were turned down low. There in a cabinet in the corner of the room, I could make out the figures of a young man and woman and a new-born babe. I was allowed only a brief glimpse of the ghostly figures and my involuntary exclamation of surprise and horror caused the medium to draw the curtain quickly.

It was the first time I had ever beheld

…s, and the impression it …ough I have now turned …y mark, will never be …ated from my memory. Since then I have attended many spiritualistic séances, and have seen and talked with ghosts that had been materialized by mediums, but never have I experienced that uncanny clutch at my heart that seized me when I beheld the spirits of young Clifton Carroll, his bride of a year, and their first born.

I have thought since, that it could have been possible that the three figures I saw were actors, who were being rehearsed in their parts by Mrs. Stryker, and who were to be materialized by her as a surprise for Mr. Carroll. Whether she used them or not, I have never heard. Mrs. Stryker was not known as a materializing medium, nor as a trumpet artist, neither did she practice the art of levitation. She was a trance medium and called her home "The Metropolitan Church of Humanity."

IN the meanwhile Carroll had had his wife, Mary E. Carroll, committed to the Middletown, N. Y., Asylum for the Insane, through Judge Dykman. It had been her fortune that Carroll had invested in the firm of Dempsey and Carroll, and he now withdrew it and spent it on Mrs. Stryker.

It was this act of Carroll's in having Mrs. Carroll, who was Mary E. Mount before her marriage, society woman and a niece of the original Brooks Brothers, clothiers, committed to a public institution as mentally deranged, that brought down the newspaper censure, and exposé of the spirit marriage of his dead son, and contributed to his downfall and poverty which ended in death. Up to this time, strange as it may seem, not a line had appeared in print regarding the most unusual wedding that had ever occurred on Manhattan Island. But now the newspapers were beginning to get on the scent of the strange affair, and led by the New York Sun which came out with four columns about the event, the other newspapers took up the hue and cry and thereafter published daily interviews with the principals in the case.

It happened at the start of this newspaper exposé that Mrs. Stryker announced to the now completely mesmerized Carroll that "Morning Star" as Clifton Carroll was known in the spirit world, had communicated to her that he was the proud father of a baby girl.

I cannot recall at this time whether or not the exact poundage at birth was given or whether he was told that "mother and child were doing well." But I do remember that on the following day after the communication of the glad tidings to the mortal Carroll, that his dead son had made him a grandfather with a spirit grandchild, that Carroll was bubbling over with joy. I do not think that Mrs. Stryker ever materialized the grandchild for it's edification as she had for mine. I am inclined to think that she was just trying out the idea on me, and had decided not to risk the materialization before Carroll, as she already had him under such complete control that he believed anything and everything she told him.

Therefore, when she suggested that the baby girl be christened at Niagara Falls, amid the rushing torrents of the cataract with a rainbow above as a benison, he met her idea with enthusiasm. I was just recently comparing notes with my brother Frank, and we both could recall the stir and bustle incident to the departure of the baptismal party. All afternoon the bell kept ringing, heralding the arrival of the guests who were to accompany Mrs. Stryker and Carroll in a private car over the New York Central.

The members of the party consisted mostly of Spiritualists and friends of Mrs. Stryker, who had attended her church services and had met Carroll there. There was a notable absence of the personal and society friends of Carroll, who had attended the marriage festivities the year before. This was due no doubt to the notoriety the case was getting in the newspapers. Those persons who had to keep up their position in society were afraid of having their names associated with this remarkable case, which was even then beginning to be the subject for jests on the part of newspaper paragraphers and of the comic weeklies.

An allegedly serious discussion arose as to the paternity of the child. There were those who solemnly maintained that wives practised polyandry in the hereafter and that it was sanctioned by the moral code prevailing in the upper regions. All this chaff and banter which tickled the risibilities of the wits of the day passed over the head of Carroll, who ignored it.

BEFORE the departure of the baptismal party for Niagara Falls, a supper was served by a caterer, and all the invited guests who were to form the travelling party partook of it. I remember how my brother and I each received a slice of the frosted cake, and how we stood on the low step of the English basement house and watched the party drive away, uptown to the Grand Central Depot, to board the private car which was attached to the regular night train for Buffalo.

I recall the return of the christening party well, and the breakfast which followed. No wine was served, yet everyone was elated. Carroll patted my head as I passed the door of the dining room and gave me a quarter for spending money.

It was said that even to the last Carroll wore a rose in his worn cut-away, which was always pressed and still had the old debonair manner. He went down and out, financially, and lost the respect of his former friends; and yet there remained one who stuck to him after his days of affluence, and who do you suppose it was? Why the author of his misfortunes—Mrs. T. B. Stryker, the medium. She moved to a cheaper neighborhood, and there took in boarders; and it was in her house that the man who believed in her mediumistic powers to the end, passed away, at 361 West 32nd Street, at the age of sixty-three. This happened in 1894. The site is now part of the yards of the Pennsylvania Station. Where trains run, there once lived a man who died happy in the belief that his dead son had married, and that out of the union had been born a child.

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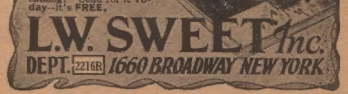

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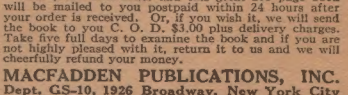

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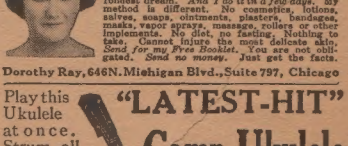

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